

THE PROMISE



THE MAGAZINE OF THE COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP

SPRING 2008

LEAD STORY

Rooting Out Poverty A PROGRESS REPORT



volunteers

Community Action & National Service:
A Case Study on Collaborative
Civic Engagement

also

in this issue:

- *Annual Convention Reflects Important Emerging Issues*
- *The Walker Company & Gateway Community Action Build Strong Communities*
- *Washington State CAAs "Brand" Together*
- *Finding Funding — Two CAA's Quest for Diversification*
- *Taking a Spring Break to Help Those in Need*
- *Learn to Earn Program Provides Job Training ... and lots more*



Aaron Smedley, a member of the Northfork Community Neighborhood Watch. Mr. Smedley has been a Retired & Senior Volunteer (RSVP) for the past 3 years.

As a member of the neighborhood watch group he patrols his community and reports suspicious activity to the sheriff's department. The neighborhood watch group meets monthly to discuss problems that arise and how best to address them.

Cover photo:
Braving a cold and snowy Montana morning, RSVP volunteer Virginia Jacobs makes her way to the post office to retrieve the mail. Virginia volunteers for the Human Resource Development Council's Livingston office.

The Promise is the magazine of the Community Action Partnership and is dedicated to

Community Action and the 13 million people who change their lives each year with the help of our great network.



COMMUNITY ACTION CHANGES
PEOPLE'S LIVES, EMBODIES THE SPIRIT
OF HOPE, IMPROVES COMMUNITIES, AND
MAKES AMERICA A BETTER PLACE TO
LIVE. WE CARE ABOUT THE ENTIRE
COMMUNITY, AND WE ARE DEDICATED TO
HELPING PEOPLE HELP THEMSELVES AND
EACH OTHER. **THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY ACTION**

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THE PROMISE



VOICES THAT NEED TO BE HEARD; STORIES THAT MUST BE TOLD

by Don Mathis, President and CEO, Community Action Partnership

Everyday, you can pick up a newspaper, turn on the TV and radio, or enter the blogosphere and get graphic stories of the painful, devastating effects of poverty. Job layoffs, loss of health insurance, hunger, mortgage foreclosures, no available funds for heating fuel; senior citizens and poor families who are forced to choose between buying their medicine or their food...the skyrocketing food and fuel prices, the inadequacy of food stamp levels (about \$1 per meal per person)...these stories are widespread across America. They appear in small town weeklies and the front page of the New York Times.

Stories of poverty in America are too numerous and compelling to ignore. Only the most heartless of cynics would deny the extent and growing numbers of people who are suffering and outside the economic mainstream.

Our Partnership is working closely with the Coalition on Human Needs (CHN) and the Emergency Campaign for America's Priorities (ECAP) in gathering stories from Community Action Agencies. Our purpose is not to exploit the hardships of these individuals, families, children, and seniors. We will continue to respect and honor the confidentiality of anyone — staff or program participant — willing to share his/her story.

We also are looking for success stories of how Community Action has helped, how individuals and families have overcome obstacles and barriers. This is a key strategy of our national "Rooting Out Poverty" campaign.

How you can help. When stories of poverty appear in your area's newspapers or on the air, it presents perfect opportunities for you to write letters to the editor or ask for air time to respond to the stories and describe how your programs and services help lift people out of poverty. When your letter or op-ed article appears, please make sure we get a copy.

By broadening the constituency of people who are concerned about alleviating poverty, we strengthen our Community Action movement and our nation overall.

Don Mathis

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Communities and States are Rooting Out Poverty

By Lisa Holland, Director of Communications, Community Action Partnership

This is one in a series of articles highlighting *Rooting Out Poverty: A Campaign by America's Community Action Network*. In this month's issue, we feature the innovative ways CAAs are using *Rooting Out Poverty* in their communities.

Since **Rooting Out Poverty** was first launched earlier this year, CAAs have worked diligently on outreach for this critical campaign. In addition to seven agencies serving as launch sites on January 9, the campaign's official national release, CAAs have utilized the campaign in their local communities as a blueprint for addressing poverty related problems. They are mailing copies to elected officials, giving presentations to community groups, and broadening the constituency of Americans who want to help improve the lives and futures of those with the greatest needs. During National Community Action Month in May, CAAs are being encouraged to shape their events and activities around the *Rooting Out Poverty* campaign, and this year's planning guide incorporates *Rooting Out Poverty* concepts and themes into all the sample materials.

Involvement from CAAs on the local level has been crucial to the national execution of *Rooting Out Poverty*, especially in the initial stages. As James Norman, Chairman of the steering committee for the National Symposium on Poverty and Economic Security and President and CEO of Action for a Better

Community in Rochester, New York noted, "In order for the *Rooting Out Poverty* campaign to truly be a vibrant national effort, we need an outburst of organized and focused efforts at the local, state and regional levels that are designed to implement the recommended or related strategies, measure progress against success targets, and produce periodic reports of results."

In recent weeks, there certainly has been an outburst of organized and focused efforts at the local, state, and regional levels. Here are just a few examples.

Minnesota

- Jim Scheibel, a former Minnesota CAA Executive Director, spoke about *Rooting Out Poverty* and highlighted the action themes during the 4th Annual Community Action and Partners All Staff Training Event in Fergus Fall, Minnesota. The event, sponsored by West Central Initiative, also included a *Rooting Out Poverty* panel discussion on how the themes tie into Minnesota's current Community Action initiatives and how CAAs can further their use in the future. Participants received a copy of **Rooting Out Poverty** courtesy of the Minnesota Department of Human Services Office of Economic Opportunity.
- **Minnesota CAAs** have developed a year-long plan for implementing



The flyer promoting the 4th Annual Community Action and Partners All Staff Training Event featured the *Rooting Out Poverty* five action themes

Rooting Out Poverty. Some of the scheduled projects include identifying potential indicators of the five action themes and researching possible measures for those indicators, drafting talking points on the five themes, producing a voters guide with information on the themes and nonpartisan questions people can ask candidates, working with Minnesota Public Radio to develop the framework for a series on poverty, and designing curriculum for schools that CAAs could use to encourage service learning.

- The Head Start program at Lakes and Prairies Community Action Partnership in Mora, Minnesota is aligning its planning with the *Rooting Out Poverty* action themes.

New York

The second annual Symposium on Poverty and Economic Security, hosted by the **New York State**



During the 4th Annual Community Action and Partners All Staff Training Event, Jim Scheibel (left) discussed **Rooting Out Poverty**'s five action themes with Minnesota CAA representatives. Pam Bernstein (above, left) attended the event and is planning to use the themes as a basis for mobilizing Head Start families at Lakes and Prairies Community Action Partnership.

The Walker Company and Gateway Community Action Build Strong Communities

By Kip Bowmar, CCAP, 1st Vice Chair, Community Action Partnership Board of Directors; Executive Director, Community Action Kentucky

The history of the Commonwealth of Kentucky includes a tradition of neighbor helping neighbor, particularly in times of great need. The spirit of that tradition lives on today with The Walker Company, a Mount Sterling based construction company, and **Gateway Community Action Agency**.



When The Walker Company employee group wanted to help people in their communities, they contacted Gateway Community Action and began working on creating The Caring Program. The Caring Program is designed to help people who are in crisis and in need, and who live in Bath, Menifee, and Montgomery counties—where members of the employee group reside. “We have been very pleased to

work with Gateway Community Action because we see the incredible impact they have had in our communities,” said Debbie Helton, a spokeswoman for The Walker Company. “This has been a great partnership that has helped a lot of people.”

Last fall, The Walker Company hosted an event called “Dozer Day.” Dozer days are held by construction companies around the country, but this one was unique because of its connection to Community Action. The event gave families the opportunity to get up close, explore, and even operate



construction equipment. It was a day of fun activities, free food, and exposure to the construction industry. The net proceeds of the event—more than \$11,000—benefited The Caring Program.

At its 2007 annual meeting, Gateway



Community Action gave special recognition to The Walker Company and its employees for creating The Caring Program and their desire to help make life better for those in need. “Because of their care and commitment to the community, we have been able to help hundreds of needy families over the last three years that we simply could not have done without them,” said Dennis Gulley, Gateway Community Action Executive Director. “They have been a great partner in helping build a stronger community.” ♦

Kentucky families got a firsthand look at how construction equipment works during the “Dozer Day” event sponsored by The Walker Company. Proceeds from the event benefited the company’s The Caring Program, which helps program participants from Gateway Community Action.

Convention, *continued from page 10*

in the convention training sessions, workshops, and other events. Visit our website at www.communityactionpartnership.com to get all the information you need to register, reserve hotel rooms, and submit nominations for the Jayne Thomas Volunteer and Sargent Shriver Achievement Awards.

Community Service Experience

Our host CAA, Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County (CEDA), is planning several unique events for the

convention including the **Community Services afternoon on Tuesday, August 26**. CEDA is planning a group Head Start and Affordable Housing Project at the Joseph Freelon Center in Chicago. Transportation will be provided for all participants. Watch our **eNews** and website for more information.

CEDA is also organizing a **5 mile Run/Walk for Food** by the shores of Lake Michigan. Details will be available soon.

Send Your Greetings

The excitement and energy of being in Chicago is unbeatable! Place an ad in

the convention program book to send general greetings; support a candidate for Partnership office; highlight your own Community Action Agency; or honor an outstanding program participant or volunteer. **Use the form on page 15 in this issue of *The Promise*** to order an exhibit booth in the Marketplace or an ad for the Program Book.

Hotel

The Marriott Chicago Downtown is offering a fabulous rate of **\$179 single and double**. To make a reservation, go

Convention, *continued on following page*

Why Become a CCAP Candidate?

By Jim Lopresti, Director of the Certified Community Action Professional Program

Candidates for certification are asked to explain why they want to become a Certified Community Action Professional (CCAP). While their answers are often specifically related to their own Community Action Agency and job responsibilities, they often cluster in specific areas.

Frequently candidates indicate that they expect certification to help them advance in their careers. Many candidates speak about the validation of their professionalism and commitment to Community Action that becoming a CCAP provides. They mention being eager to learn more about the history, vision and values of Community Action as they participate in the candidacy process. And they anticipate the outcome of the process to include a deeper understanding of how their own work contributes to the mission of Community Action.



One candidate put it this way: "I believe in the mission and purpose of Community Action, and becoming a CCAP is one way of demonstrating this commitment individually and as an employee of my CAA. It is an investment of time and energy which will help sharpen and deepen my own focus on Community Action in the big picture as well as in the daily performance of my responsibilities."

"I believe in the mission and purpose of Community Action, and becoming a CCAP is one way of demonstrating this commitment individually and as an employee of my CAA. It is an investment of time and energy which will help sharpen and deepen my own focus on Community Action in the big picture as well as in the daily performance of my responsibilities."

In a recent survey about the impact of being certified, a group of CCAPs in Region VII demonstrated that the expectations of these candidates are on target. Asked to describe the most important impact of becoming a CCAP, one CAA Executive Director said it "gave me the confidence and knowledge base to consider applying for the position of Executive Director of my agency. If not for the process of certification, I would not have pursued the position."

A Head Start Director at another CAA said: "It helped me think in broader terms of the agency and to re-focus me on the real job of CAA, being an advocate for people in poverty and to get the word out to the community." Speaking about how CCAP has affected her agency as a whole, she said: "We think 'impact of poverty' on folks and not department lines."

A CCAP who is the Executive Director of an agency with a number of CCAPs on staff put it this way: "We now have a management team that truly understands community action history and what our overall mission is. It helps to take people out of the silo mentality and places them into looking for ways to use all available resources to help families become self sufficient." One of the team members of her agency agreed, saying that the staff in all their programs works toward a common goal with full understanding how "each program is part of a bigger whole and each agency a part of the bigger picture with the mission to eliminate poverty." ❖

Convention, continued from page 6

to <http://cwp.marriott.com/chidt/capn/> to make your reservation online. Or call: 1 (800) 228-9290 or (312) 836-0100. You must mention Community Action Partnership to get the convention rate.

Situated on Michigan Avenue's Magnificent Mile among world-

famous shopping, restaurants, and entertainment, the Chicago Marriott is also within walking distance to the Navy Pier, Museum Districts, and many other top Windy City attractions.

Chicago – a great city. The Partnership – great people. Community

Action – a truly great mission. Join more than 1,000 of your friends and colleagues August 26-29 at the beautiful Chicago Marriott Downtown. We greatly appreciate your support and look forward to having you participate in our 2008 convention! ❖

8 Washington State CAAs “Brand” Together

By Bob Swanson, Executive Director, Washington State Community Action Partnership

Community Action Agencies in Washington State face the same issue many other states are challenged by – numerous agencies, different names, but a common goal—Helping People. Changing Lives.

In March, the **Washington State Community Action Partnership** hosted its Second Annual Public Relations and Development Conference. The conference was developed two years ago in order for local Community Action professionals to gain knowledge and expertise from each other, as well as to help deliver our statewide message of Community Action. This year, the main focus of the conference was on branding.

Duane Knapp, Chairman and Founder of BrandStrategy, Inc. was with us for an afternoon to discuss the Community Action Brand and Promise. Duane was a driving force behind the national Community Action Partnership’s name change, branding and Promise.

Although many of our agencies use some form of the national Community Action logo and Promise, Duane provided some great options for those that were a little more reluctant. The consensus of the room was that everyone (at a minimum) would move toward using “Helping People. Changing Lives.” in their publications. Another favorite option was to use the Community Action logo as a halo logo.

This would allow them to keep their own agency logo while also including the Community Action Partnership logo on their letterhead, just as many agencies use the United Way logo. We also purchased his most recent book *The BrandPromise: How Ketel One, Costco, Make-A-Wish, Tourism Vancouver, and Other Leading Brands Make and Keep the Promise That Guarantees Success!* for all our agencies.



The Washington State Community Action Partnership logo

Duane was even able to live out the Promise in his unique way. During a break, he traveled down a couple blocks to greet a man he had seen earlier. This man was on the corner with a sign, looking for help and work. Duane’s gentle and friendly approach to this man was refreshing as he asked him if he’d like to go to a place that would help him change his life. The man was of course excited about the opportunity, agreed to go to the local Community Action Agency and follow up with Duane to share his experience. ❖

The concept of living the Promise is so important to the success of our agencies – which is when our participants, our community members, our neighbors, are reaching their full potential and achieving self-sufficiency. As Duane reminded us, it’s the ultimate way to pay it forward.



Washington State CAA representatives, standing proudly in front of their Community Action banner, attend a state-wide conference on the Community Action brand and Promise

Pathways to Excellence — A Gold Mine!

9

By Sharon Anderson, Executive Director, Family Connection Center, Clearfield, Utah

At our Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) regional conference two years ago, I found myself along with two other agency leaders sitting in a workshop called Award for Excellence. Since our agency had just been through audits by the Federal Labor Commission, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Equal Opportunity State Office and passed them all with positive outcomes, we were feeling pretty good about the agency. So when we learned about the Award for Excellence we thought that we were in a pretty good place to apply.

Little did we know.

First, we didn't know what we didn't know. However, the process of discovery has been very challenging and exciting. After thinking about whether or not we wanted to jump into this process for about a year, we took the plunge about eleven months ago. Our Board of Directors supported our applying for the Pathways to Excellence part of the process and several staff

The long awaited moment came when we received the Peer Review. Here was the gold mine we had been expecting. Each statement in each category had strengths and suggestions for improvement. Of course, there were questions we had to answer by saying we were not currently performing that activity. In those cases, the Peer Review was so valuable in giving us suggestions on how to begin.

Continuous improvement is now part of the cultural shift we are making. We saw the whole process as a tool for critical self-analysis which we could use to improve our organization in ways we had never tried or conceived. We have been very pleasantly surprised to find that other people, outside the agency, are interested in what we are doing, giving us new and unexpected opportunities.

When participating in Pathways, the CAA's leadership has to be passionately involved. As staff faces the challenge of learning new words and new definitions

PATHWAYS TO EXCELLENCE is the Community Action Partnership's initiative to build the capacity of CAAs through learning and continuous improvement. Pathways uses the Community Action Partnership's Standards of Excellence and a rigorous self-assessment process to help CAAs foster an agency-wide environment of excellence and determine organizational strengths and opportunities for improvement. CAAs enrolling in Pathways receive two days of training on the Standards and how to conduct an organizational self-study. CAAs then have nine months to complete their self-studies and submit them for peer review. Afterwards, each CAA receives a comprehensive written feedback report to use as a roadmap on its journey toward excellence. For more information, go to www.communityactionpartnership.com and click on the "Excellence" link.



Family Connection Center staff members Bev Snyder, Jason Wilde, Gene Lopez, Sharon Anderson, Danielle Falcione, and Donna Hyde worked together to prepare the CAA's Pathways to Excellence Self Study, and also created a mobile of the seven categories from the Standards of Excellence. Also working on the Self-Study but not shown are Jan Welch and Donnette Barber.

members participated in Pathways training over a period of about two years. The process of answering the 99 questions in the seven categories allowed us to learn about ourselves, our agency, our customers, and partners as opposed to having someone tell us what we should be doing. During this process, we became aware of what we needed to learn in order to meet the standards.

for old words, seeing the organization in new ways, understand how important structure is to the overall functioning of the agency, someone needs to be a cheerleader. Many of our staff knew that we were good at meeting the requirements of the grants that fund our agency, but we didn't know that the underlying structure of the organization is just as important and more important to the long term life of the agency.

In conclusion, this was the most challenging experience our whole staff has been through. We even quit at one point and said we needed to get our jobs done first and if we could get back to the process later we would. Well we did, and by asking for a two month extension, we were able to finish. Here is our advice, just as Winston Churchill said at a graduation ceremony, "Never give up. Never give up. Never give up." ♦

Annual Convention Reflects Important Emerging Issues

By Avril Weisman, Vice President, Community Action Partnership

Quality presentations, informative speakers, time to network with your colleagues and friends... up-to-the minute news-you-can-use... interactive opportunities to exchange ideas and tap into the collective wisdom and experience of the Community Action Movement...and some fun... these are just a few of the key elements of the Community Action Partnership's **2008 Annual Convention.**

We want to invite you to join us in Chicago and participate in the convention as we celebrate **"Community Action: Sowing the Seeds of Change."** This is an investment in your future and time well spent with colleagues and partners who share your passion and commitment to ending poverty.

"Change" certainly is the most-often heard word in communities across America. Our 2008 convention will focus on strategies for the future, lessons learned from our past, and opportunities for advocating and promoting economic security for all – especially those with the greatest needs – in America. Change is nothing new to Community Action. In fact, it is because of our ability to adapt, reinvent, and change how we do almost anything – because we are "perpetually relevant" that our network survives and thrives in the 21st century, even more so than in the early days of the movement.

Tracks and Areas of Focus

Below you will find a listing of some of the subject areas we will cover at the Annual Convention. Watch our **eNews** and website for information, updates, preliminary schedules, and announcements as we confirm additional keynote speakers.

- Head Start
- Emergency Management
- Structural Racism
- Energy Issues
- Marketing your CAA
- Human Resources & Personnel Management

Community Action Head Start Day

Make your travel plans now so you will arrive in Chicago early enough to join us Tuesday, August 26, at 11:00 am.

Convention participants have an opportunity to leave Chicago more beautiful than we found it and help improve the lives of local youngsters. At 11:00 am Tuesday morning, we will board coach buses for south suburban Chicago Heights. Upon arrival, we will have a picnic lunch, then, get to work.

The 1st gardening crew will begin the prep work for a beautiful summer/fall garden at Freelon Head Start. As the second crew begins to plant, the 1st crew will continue down the block weeding and prepping until we reach CEDA's Woodson Complex; affordable housing for mixed income residents.

The 3rd crew remains at Freelon Head Start to paint the fence.

When the 2nd crew completes its planting, and the 3rd crew completes its painting, it's back to the hotel. Plan for a half-day of rewarding work. There is no charge for this event but you **must** pre-register to participate. Please see the Convention Registration form on the following page. If you have already registered for the Convention and you would like to participate in this event, please email Sranda Watkins at swatkins@communityactionpartnership.com.

***"When your back stops aching and your hands begin to harden,
You will find yourself a partner in the Glory of the Garden."
Rudyard Kipling***

- Senior Programs
- Youth and Adolescent Programs
- Housing and Community Development

We will be having intensive sessions of three hours or more in addition to the traditional 90 minute workshop educational sessions.

In Chicago, you can learn more about our new collaborative projects and initiatives to benefit your agency. In the past several months new or stronger partnerships have been formed with AARP (Divided We Fail), Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (Economic Security Task Force), Coalition on Human Needs (Unmet Needs), Alliance for Public Technology, Food Research and Action Center (Child Nutrition Forum), National Low Income Housing Coalition, and several others. Meet these partners who support and promote the Promise message and the mission of Community Action.

At the time of printing, the following speakers have confirmed:

Tom Nelson – Chief Operating Officer of AARP, with 40 million members

Michael Greenberger – Director of the Center for Health and Homeland Security at the University of Maryland and a professor at the School of Law

Debbie Weinstein – Executive Director, Coalition on Human Needs, Washington, DC

Participate & Register

Make this year a "total convention experience." Get your entire agency involved: honor an outstanding success story and special volunteer; submit a Call for Presentations to share your best practice or program; display your agency's greetings in the convention program book; and participate fully

Convention, continued on page 6

COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP 2008 ANNUAL CONVENTION

Community Action: Sowing the Seeds of Change



August 26-29, 2008

Marriott Chicago Downtown Magnificent Mile
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Name _____ Name on badge _____
 Title _____
 Agency _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
 Telephone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

YES, I want to register for the **Community Service Experience Head Start Day** on Tuesday, August 26 (see page 10 inset). There is no charge for this activity.

If you are physically challenged or you require special services, please let us know.



2008 CONVENTION REGISTRATION FEES

	Member Agencies	Member Discount	Non-Member Agencies	Amount Due
Early Bird (until July 14)	\$495 each	Save \$50 on your 6th registration and each one thereafter	\$800	\$ _____
Discounted (July 15-Aug 15)	\$550 each		\$850	\$ _____
Regular (after Aug 15)	\$675 each		\$900	\$ _____
			TOTAL	\$ _____

PAYMENT: CHECK, PURCHASE ORDER, OR CREDIT CARD INFORMATION MUST ACCOMPANY THIS REGISTRATION FORM.

Check enclosed for \$ _____ Purchase Order # _____
 Please charge \$ _____ to my: Visa Mastercard Discover American Express
 Card # _____ Expiration Date _____
 Name on card _____ Company _____
 Signature _____

Make checks payable to Community Action Partnership. Note: A portion of the room rates will help to defray Community Action Partnership's expenses. Cancellations: Must be submitted in writing by August 1, 2007, Attn: Linda Goff. Fees cannot be refunded after August 1. A handling charge of \$125 per person will apply to all cancellation requests. Substitute registrants are permitted; please notify Community Action Partnership of any substitutions.

Please submit a separate form for each participant.

**Fax or mail to: Community Action Partnership, 1140 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 1210, Washington, DC 20036
 Fax: (202) 265-5048 ▪ Phone (202) 265-7546 ▪ Federal Tax ID 52-1120274**

Taking a Spring Break to Help Those in Need

By Ed Hilt, Grants Manager, Tri-County Community Action Partnership, Bridgeton, New Jersey

Since 1999, **Tri-County Community Action Partnership** in Bridgeton, New Jersey has been an alternative spring break site for more than 400 college students across the country who volunteer in the child care classrooms, maintenance and administration offices, and in the housing and community development departments. Tri-County houses and feeds the students and faculty advisors, and provides cultural and historical experiences during their visits. This year, the CAA hosted students from the State University of New York, Plattsburgh and Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina.



Kim Garrison, a college student from the State University of New York, Plattsburgh, spent her fourth consecutive spring break volunteering with Tri-County Community Action Partnership's Break Away alternative spring break program. "I love the people here," she said of Tri-County. "I love coming back and seeing the same faces and interacting with them."

Kim Garrison could have spent the spring break of her senior year like many college students, relaxing on a beach somewhere in Florida or resting at home before returning to the grind of school work. She thought about it, but only for a minute. In her heart, she knew where she really belonged.

Garrison signed up for another week in Bridgeton, New Jersey volunteering at Tri-County Community Action Partnership's *Break Away* alternative spring break program. It is her fourth consecutive year in Bridgeton, which is unprecedented for the program. Most participants visit only one year or perhaps two. Garrison, a cultural anthropology major at the State University of New York, Plattsburgh, has returned each year because of the people she's met and her memorable experiences with the children. "I just love it," said Garrison, 21, from Canajoharie, New York, one of 11 students from Plattsburgh who spent the week at Tri-County. "I love

Spring Break, continued on page 13



Eleven of Kim's fellow students from SUNY Plattsburgh participated in the program. Here, students enjoy roller skating with a child from the CAA's after school program.

No Beach, No Problem!



Students from Appalachian State University volunteered at Tri-County Community Action Partnership during their spring break

Virginia Bates and Kate Douglass were two of 10 Appalachian State University students (and one advisor) who spent their spring break volunteering at Tri-County's "Break Away" program. This is their personal account of the experience.

After 13 hours and three traffic jams, 11 eager strangers from Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina arrived at Tri-County Community Action Partnership in Bridgeton, New Jersey. We had much anticipation and few expectations, but we could not have foreseen all that was in store for us. We spent our mornings with Head Start kids, our afternoons tutoring local middle schools, and all day every day having an awesome time. The typical college student wouldn't consider what we did a spring "break," but for our week off this year, we decided we needed an alternative. It may appear that this was a sacrifice on our part, but we are not quite the selfish students that some make us out to be. We all made new friends, had fun and gained from our experience in New Jersey.

All week, children and adults asked why we would "give up" our spring break. The answer to this question is revealed in the things that the students had to say by the end of the week:

"I am so glad I came! I loved every second of it."

"This trip taught me to trust that if you truly pour your heart into something, you can only reap good things."

"This trip has strengthened my resolve to give something back."

"I have not done any volunteer work since high school and being on this trip made me realize how much I used to enjoy giving and lending a hand to others."

Finding Funding — Two CAAs' Quest for Diversification

By Heather Burton, Marketing Manager, Sage Software, Nonprofit Solutions, Austin, Texas

Nonprofits everywhere are watching the current economic conditions, trying to determine if their programming will be affected. Likewise, Community Action Agencies (CAAs) are seeing grant dollars become less certain each year. Some agencies have turned this potential negative situation into a strategic, proactive approach to having a diversified funding portfolio.

"We're realizing that government grants are dwindling, and coming with more limiting restrictions," says Bernice Robinson, Fiscal Director for **Western Community Action** in Marshall, Minnesota. Robinson says the agency used to chase grants. "Obtaining grants often meant altering our activities," she explains. "Now we're focusing first on our mission and vision, and then finding grants to fund our preferred activities. We're taking more of a proactive approach." The CAA has not yet tapped into individual donors, says Robinson, "however, we recently received an email from someone wanting to add Western Community Action to

his will. This has never happened, so we're excited about this possible new funding avenue."

Utah's **Salt Lake Community Action Program** began diversifying their funding sources three years ago. The CAA's largest initial focus was on broadening its Head Start programs, including holding an annual gala called Head Start Bloom—which netted \$107,000 in 2007. "One of our major goals several years ago was to develop an early childhood development program using the Early Head Start model," said Pam Boede, SLCAP's development officer.



The Salt Lake Community Action Program has diversified its funding sources through donations from companies such as MHTN Architecture, which helped build a new Head Start classroom.

SLCAP partnered with a local alternative high school serving low-income students. The school provides facilities and a portion of the staffing, while SLCAP provides additional staff, staff training, and educational supplies and furnishings. Since 2006, this program was funded by private foundation and corporate donations. Starting next year, it will be primarily funded by Early Head Start grant monies.

"When development staff members bring in additional funding, they help improve the financial stability of their agency and programs," Boede concludes.

"High-quality programs generally require more money than grants can provide, particularly due to cutbacks over the years. Additional monies can be directed toward facilities, or used to grow programs, provide teacher training, pilot new activities, and provide more support services. Overall, funding diversification can really help move programs from being good, solid, quality programs, to being programs of excellence." ❖

Spring Break, *continued from preceding page*

the people here. I love coming back and seeing the same faces and interacting with them. The people here are very passionate about their work and the roles they fulfill. They make us feel at home and that they want our help."

The students assist in the child care classrooms, maintenance and administration offices, and in the housing and community development departments. Garrison said she is happy to help wherever the alternative spring break program places her, but she really likes working with children. That's what led Garrison to Bridgeton in the first place as a freshman. "I was originally an education major, and I

think that's what initially drew me to Bridgeton," said Garrison, who was in a leadership position as a site leader this time. "I like to work with kids. And then I got here, and it was like, 'Wow, I really love this experience.'"

Roberto De La Rosa, 3, smiled as Garrison helped him build a house with blocks in one of the child care classrooms one morning. Laughing, he particularly enjoyed attempting to place some of the blocks atop Kim's head. Kim clearly enjoyed the experience. "I always hope the students I arrive with get the same feeling I do when we leave," said Garrison. "It's rewarding to see the faces of the children light up when we are here with them. We're

different faces. Somebody new they get to learn about and experience."

Tri-County has operated the Break Away program since 1999—hosting more than 400 college students from over 20 colleges and universities nationwide who want to spend their vacation giving back to the community. "The enthusiasm of these young people through the years means so much to the agency," said Albert B. Kelly, President and CEO. "Not just in terms of the tasks they do, the murals they paint or the child care centers they help out in. Their excitement and dedication reminds all of us at Tri-County why we are here in the first place and how important and rewarding helping others really is." ❖

Learn to Earn Program Provides Job Training

By Peter McGrath, Associate Director, Comprehensive Community Action, Cranston, Rhode Island

In 2005, the **Comprehensive Community Action Program** in Cranston, Rhode Island began operating a Workforce Investment Act funded job training program called Learn to Earn for out of school youth. The program, which provided education services leading to a GED and job and life skills training, focused on serving hard to reach youth who had dropped out of school and had few job skills.

We were very successful at outreach and recruitment—engaging the youth, helping them complete their GED and preparing them for employment—and we were partnering with several educational and human services organizations that added to the success of the program. However, since the goal of the program was unsubsidized employment, we realized that we needed to develop relationships with the business community. Gary Littlefield, our Program Coordinator, had 20 years of retail expertise and knew the value of these partnerships.

We began looking for a business partner and had an initial conversation with CVS Pharmacy. CVS and the Department of Labor and Training had developed a training center in Washington, D.C. that worked with out of school youth and young adults to prepare them for employment in CVS stores. We wanted to duplicate this program in Rhode Island, so our program staff visited the training center.

At the same time, the Learn to Earn program was expanding to serve more youth and we were looking for larger space. Working with Workforce Solutions of Providence/Cranston, we negotiated for larger space at the Providence Place Mall for the new Providence Skills Center. The location was ideal and put our program in a very large retail mall. Moving to Providence Place Mall opened new



CVS Pharmacy built a mock store onsite at the Providence Skills Center to train people to become Pharmacy Technicians. Participants from Comprehensive Community Action Program's Learn to Earn program can apply for the training program upon completing their GED.

partnership opportunities with the business community.

CVS Pharmacy built a mock store onsite at the Providence Skills Center to train people to become Pharmacy Technicians. The CVS Pharmacy Technician Certification is a 12 week,

144 hour training program. Upon successful completion, the certification can lead to employment at one of the 60 CVS stores in Rhode Island. Our Learn to Earn participants must complete their GED before they can apply for the Pharmacy Technician training.

Due to the Pharmacy Technician training program's success, CVS is in the process of constructing a One-Hour Photo Technician program at our Warwick site. The Pharmacy and Photo Tech jobs offer a good starting salary, benefits and opportunities for young people to advance in the CVS Corporation.

Having the Providence Skills Center located in the Providence Place Mall, the National Retail Federation saw this as a good fit for their training programs. They were interested in working with us to establish a Customer Service Certification program. The National Retail Federation provided \$50,000 in start up funding. Youth who complete the customer service training may be offered paid internships in one of the malls retail stores.

The Learn to Earn program has been successful because of our partnerships with the business community. By having the CVS Corporation and National Retail Federation training programs onsite, young people are given the opportunity to develop real world skills that can lead to unsubsidized employment. ❖

Taxes, *continued from page 21*

❖ The **Virginia Community Action Partnership's** EITC Initiative supports community groups and coalitions throughout the state as they provide free tax preparation services and promote financial education, savings and asset building to low income working individuals and families. VACAP promotes the EITC through the Virginia CASH Campaign (Creating Assets, Savings and Hope) and received a \$250,000 per year appropriation for two years to provide

grants to local organizations providing outreach, education and free income tax preparation services. All Virginia CAAs provide education and outreach about the EITC, and this filing season, 22 of 26 agencies will provide free tax preparation services. Many agencies also provide financial education programs and link with savings and asset building programs like the Virginia Individual Development Account.

❖ **Community Action Agency of Delaware County, Inc.** (Media, Pennsylvania), in partnership with the IRS, opened its free tax assistance site

for the second year in a row. This year, CAADC completed 320 returns (more than triple last year's returns), generating \$520,730 in refunds, including \$169,355 in Earned Income Tax Credits and \$41,360 in Child Tax Credits. "Helping needy families get the biggest refund for which they are eligible not only helps the families, but provides capital which is returned to the local economy, said CEO Edward Coleman. Next year we plan to expand the site, bring in more volunteers and increase our capacity to complete even more returns." ❖

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Community Action A Case Study on Collabo

By Don Mathis, President and CE

With the enactment of the AmeriCorps and national service legislation in the early 1990s, public awareness of and participation in community service and volunteerism reached higher levels. Community Action Agencies across America, however, have been and continue to be proactive in providing opportunities for VISTA volunteers and Senior Corps members that help low-income families and individuals in their respective communities.



The Foster Grandparent Program of the Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO) in Troy, NY, is a wonderful opportunity for seniors to share their many life experiences with the younger generations. Pictured here is Grandma Sonia Battiste, a volunteer since October 2005

The federal Corporation for National and Community Service administers AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), the Senior Corps (three programs: RSVP, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program; Foster Grandparent; and the Senior Companion Program), and other AmeriCorps programs. Community Action Agencies connect Senior Corps



Super Senior Friday is an annual event coordinated by the Senior Companion Program of the Social Development Commission (SDC), the Community Action Agency for Milwaukee County, WI

volunteers (over the age of 55) with individuals, families, and special projects that tap into the experience and energy that older persons bring to the table. AmeriCorps*VISTA members are full-time Partnership members and other community agencies, faith-based groups, and public agencies help bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty.

Community Action, AmeriCorps and other national service programs share and promote the values

of civic engagement, strengthening communities, caring and compassion for those in need, and economic security. Our Community Action network has hundreds of success stories highlighting our effective partnership with the national service movement. Among them...



College student volunteers at Tri-County Community Action Partnership's Break Away alternative spring break program, Bridgeton, NJ, at an after-school roller skating program

The Council of the Southern Mountains Foster Grandparent Program gives children much-needed attention, helping the children learn to read, caring for children with disabilities and counseling young people in a



The Eastern Idaho Community Action Partnership (EICAP) all-staff meeting: Russ Spain, Executive Director, EICAP; Jim Dennis, Vista Volunteer (Intergenerational Mentoring); Debby Dyslin, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP); Don Mathis, President & CEO, Community Action Partnership; John Parsons, RSVP Director; Mary Chant, Executive Director, Community Action Partnership Association of Idaho; Helen Stanton, Vista Volunteer (VOICE - Volunteer Ombudsman Improving Care for the Elderly); Marie Peterson, Ombudsman for the Elderly; Chandra Evans, President, EICAP Board of Directors

& National Service: ative Civic Engagement

CEO, Community Action Partnership



More than 160 Southern Retired and Senior Volunteers of New Hampshire Services (SNHS) help to meet the needs of residents of Hillsborough County, NH, at 17 different locations, including the New Hampshire Food Bank (a program of Catholic Charities)

Two outstanding volunteers seen here below are John Washburn and Fern Jones who each contribute 30-40 hours of their time every month.



seven county area of West Virginia. The Foster Grandparents (ages 60 and over) average 20 hours of service per week and work in Head Start classrooms, child care centers, and hospitals. The **Social Development Commission** (SDC), a Partnership member in Milwaukee, Wisconsin recently honored its Senior Companions Program volunteers who are matched with and help homebound persons. Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett recognized the work of more than 150 senior volunteers on a "Super Senior Friday" as part of a Wisconsin Community Energy Resource Fair.

Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity (JCCEO) in Alabama manages the JCCEO "AmeriCorps*VISTA Energy Assistance Network that is building

a comprehensive energy assistance and energy education system for low-income families in Jefferson County (which has the greatest number of low-income people of any county in the state). Governor Bob Riley honored the JCCEO volunteers during a statewide "Day of Service."

Helen Stanton, a highly valued AmeriCorps* VISTA member with the **Eastern Idaho Community Action Partnership** was honored as the volunteer of the year at EICAP's recent annual meeting. Helen not only organizes and recruits dozens of volunteers to help with EICAP programs, she also helps train and orient new AmeriCorps*VISTA members across the state. Russ Spain, EICAP's executive director notes, "Helen Stanton is an incredible asset for our agency and is an inspiration to the volunteers she recruits and to our staff and board members."



JCCEO AmeriCorps*VISTA Worker, Marion Evans being greeted by Alabama's Governor Bob Riley on a "Day of Service" preparing disaster kits for emergencies in Alabama

The Community Action Partnership is committed to expanding our involvement with AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and other programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). CNCS also has designated state offices and works with state commissions on service and volunteers (appointed by the Governors). For more information on the programs of CNCS*, visit www.nationalservice.gov ❖



Ginny Tucker of the Kno-Ho-Co Ashland Community Action Commission, Coshocton, OH, Foster Grandparent Program

**Partnership President & CEO Don Mathis previously worked as a special assistant at CNCS from 1993-1997 and chaired the Maryland Governor's Commission on Service & Volunteerism.*

18 **The Mortgage Crisis from the Homeowners' Perspective**

By Richelle Friedman, Director of Public Policy, Coalition on Human Needs, Washington, DC

Fearing widespread collapse of global financial markets, the Federal Reserve moved quickly to avert disaster by facilitating the purchase of a leading global investment bank, Bear Stearns, by J.P. Morgan Chase. The Fed bailout of Bear Stearns, in essence, consists of \$30 billion in taxpayer-backed guarantees for the firm's assets. At the core of the current crisis facing investment banks is that the securities they trade are backed by sub prime mortgages with diminished value as housing prices are in a free-

from an FHA-approved lender of less than the original mortgage but more than they could collect from the borrower. In exchange, lenders would be relieved of further risk from the mortgages which a new FHA-approved lender would then hold and the FHA would ensure.

Only owner-occupants would be eligible for the new FHA-insured mortgage. No investors or investor properties would qualify. The program would be voluntary. Provisions would be put in place to prevent borrowers

payment and closing costs. Seventy-five percent of the funds would be in the form of loans, which must be repaid in two years for homeownership properties and five years for rental properties, to finance acquisition and rehabilitation costs.

Low-income housing advocates are expressing concern that this and other pending legislation attempting to address the housing crisis does not target at least some of the resources to those with the highest housing cost burdens. The state homeownership



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

fall and home foreclosures spiral out of control. While the Bush Administration focuses on ameliorating the impact on financial markets and warns against congressional overreaction to limit the number of foreclosures, congressional leaders are gearing up to act on behalf of at-risk homeowners.

Both Representative Frank (D-MA), Chairman of the House Committee on Financial Services, and Senator Dodd (D-CT), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, are developing legislation that would provide homeowners facing difficulty in meeting their mortgage payments the opportunity to refinance abusive loans. The purpose of the legislation they have outlined is to stem the significant rise in mortgage foreclosures. The legislation would allow the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to insure and guarantee refinanced mortgages that have been restructured by mortgage holders and lenders to a level that the borrower can reasonably be expected to pay. The lender holding the initial mortgage would receive a cash payment

from abusing the system, for example, by quickly selling their home at a profit. If they sold within five years they would pay an exit fee and a share of any profits to FHA. Borrowers would also be required to purchase FHA insurance. Both House and Senate bills will sunset in five years.

The House bill has another component that includes providing \$10 billion in loans and grants to states to purchase and rehabilitate vacant, foreclosed homes and rental properties. States would receive funding based on their percentage of nationwide foreclosures adjusted to account for their state's median home price. They, in turn, would allocate funds to housing authorities and other government agencies, nonprofits, and private sector entities for the purchase and resale of foreclosed homes to new owner-occupants. Government entities and nonprofits could also receive these funds for rental housing developments. Twenty-five percent of the funds could be used for grants to pay property taxes, insurance during the pre-occupancy phase, and could also cover down

program in legislation Representative Frank plans to introduce, for example, could benefit families with incomes as high as 140 percent of area median income. The rehabilitated rental properties could provide housing to those whose income is up to 100 percent of area median. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, nationwide renters with the heaviest housing cost burdens are extremely-low and very-low income with incomes below 30 percent and 50 percent of area median incomes, respectively. There are also many potential qualified homeowners earning significantly less than 140 percent of area median income.

Among the provisions in legislation introduced by other members of Congress are ones that authorize bankruptcy courts to write down mortgages and protect principle residences, and call for new disclosure requirements that lenders must follow when negotiating with potential homebuyers. Ultimately the House and Senate could vote on a bill that would combine provisions from several bills. ❖

Help Program Participants Receive their Economic Stimulus Payments

19

Starting in May, the US Department of Treasury will begin sending economic stimulus payments to more than 130 million households. **To receive a payment, taxpayers must have a valid Social Security number, at least \$3,000 of qualifying income and file a 2007 federal tax return.** Eligible people will receive up to \$600 (\$1,200 for married couples), and parents

will receive an additional \$500 for each eligible child younger than 17.

Millions of retirees, disabled veterans and low-wage workers who usually are exempt from filing a tax return must do so this year in order to receive a stimulus payment. Many of them are in danger of missing out on these valuable stimulus payments. Since they

**Seniors! Veterans!
People with Disabilities!
Have you heard?**

You Can Get an Economic Stimulus Payment from the Government Worth \$300, or \$600 for Married Couples!

To get your payment:

- 1 **File a tax form (Form 1040A) with the IRS by October 15.**
The IRS may already have sent you Form 1040A and special instructions.
- 2 **You must file the form even if you do not usually file taxes.**

You can qualify for a payment:

- 1 **If you had \$3,000 or more in income in 2007 from Social Security benefits; Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI); veterans disability benefits; Railroad Retirement benefits; earnings from work; OR a combination of any of these benefits and pay.**
- 2 **The payment should not affect other benefits you may get, like SSI, Food Stamps or Medicaid!**

Have Questions?
Call the IRS at **1-866-234-2942** or visit www.irs.gov.
Click on "Stimulus Payment Rebate Questions" for help.
Need More Help?



Montana Senator Max Baucus stopped by the Penkay Eagles Manor operated by the Rocky Mountain Development Council in Helena to remind the residents to file a tax return in order to receive their Economic Stimulus Payments.

often don't owe income tax and don't usually file a tax return, they may need assistance to file. **CAAs can play a key role by getting the word out to these individuals. Talk with your program participants and make sure they have filed a return in order to receive their payments. For more information, call the IRS at 1-866-234-2942 or go to www.irs.gov and click on "Stimulus Payment Rebate Questions".**

AARP and the National Council on Aging have developed a web-based tool which provides simple, easy-to-use instructions on completing, printing, and mailing the IRS Form 1040A. To access the tool, go to www.AARP.org/stimulus or www.BenefitsCheckUp.org. ❖

Rooting Out, continued from page 28

Ohio

The Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies is hosting a Summit on Poverty in the State Capitol. Included will be the release of the OACAA Annual State of Poverty in Ohio Report, which will use the Rooting Out Poverty action themes as a basis for needed changes.

Maryland

In order to help the public learn more about poverty, the Montgomery County Community Action Board in Silver Spring, Maryland held a presentation and distributed copies of **Rooting Out Poverty**.

As Rooting Out Poverty continues to gain momentum, we plan to share more

stories—including yours.

Email all your great campaign news to Don Mathis, President/CEO at dmathis@communityactionpartnership.com. You can also share your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions for taking Rooting Out Poverty to the next level.

Stay tuned! This is a work in progress and we've only just begun. ❖

CAA Tax Preparation Assistance Helps Working Families Build Assets

By Lisa Holland, Director of Communications, Community Action Partnership

Each tax season, CAAs work diligently to ensure that low-income tax payers are aware of, claim, and get the most out of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)—a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income families that helps pay for necessities, repair homes, and save for the future. CAAs also provide free tax preparation assistance through programs like the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) and conduct a variety of outreach efforts, some of which are described below.

❖ **Cumberland Community Action Program, Inc.** in Cumberland County, North Carolina has sponsored an EITC outreach and free tax preparation project for the past four years. In 2007, CCAP prepared returns for 120 low income clients, returning a total of \$502,920 in refunds and credits. For the 2008 tax season, the CAA is partnering with other organizations to conduct a media campaign to increase awareness of the availability of free tax preparation assistance and the need for financial literacy education. The agency plans to provide tax preparation assistance and financial literacy education and counseling for more than 200 low to moderate income families.

❖ In order to reach individuals who do not have transportation to tax preparation sites, **First State Community Action Agency, Inc.** in Georgetown, Delaware created a mobile lab. CAA staff and volunteers travel once a month to low-income communities in Kent and Sussex counties to provide tax assistance and financial education information. The service has received positive feedback from community leaders and created a greater sense of financial stability for families.

❖ **STEP, Inc.**, in Rocky Mount, Virginia held a free hot dog giveaway at a local Wal-Mart on January 31—National EITC Day—to promote its growing tax assistance program. CAA staff served 200 hot dogs,

chips, sodas and Payday candy bars in the parking lot to hungry and interested shoppers. In addition, staff distributed informational flyers on STEP's 20 programs, including the tax assistance program and the Individual Development Assets savings program. To date, 22 volunteers have prepared 93 federal returns representing \$84,829 in total refunds. Thirty eight returns have qualified for EITC, resulting in \$42,041 in total EITC refunds. The average federal tax return refund has been \$912 and the average EITC refund has been \$1,106. In addition, county residents using this free service have saved \$18,600 in tax preparation fees. STEP's goal this year is to prepare 150 returns, three times as many as were completed in 2005 when it first began the tax assistance program. The CAA operates the program in partnership with Ferrum College.

❖ **The Social Development Commission** in Milwaukee, Wisconsin is the lead agency for the Milwaukee Asset Building Coalition (MABC) a private/public partnership that provides financial education and planning for low-income residents. MABC operates free tax sites that last year helped file more than 10,000 tax forms and

CAAs nationwide offer free tax preparation assistance to low-income families and promote the Earned Income Tax Credit



Connecticut Tax Assistance

generated more than \$14 million in tax refunds and credits to local residents. This year, the organization is making a special effort to make its services more available to the disabled by scheduling visits of its Mobile Team to both Goodwill and Independence First facilities. At a formal kick-off ceremony hosted by SDC, Michael Morris, Director of the National Disability Institute, praised MABC's outreach efforts to the many disabled Milwaukee County residents who have not in the past been able to use the free services.

❖ **The Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.** in New Britain, Connecticut is part of the New



People Inc. Tax Assistance

Britain Asset-Building Coalition, which was formed to increase the availability of VITA services within the area. Over 1,000 taxpayers were served during the 2007 tax season, an increase of over 28% from the previous year. In March, HRA staff, IRS representatives and VITA volunteers delivered tax preparation services to seniors and disabled citizens onsite at their housing complex—the first coordinated effort to complete



STEP Inc. Tax Assistance

CAA Tax Preparation Assistance, continued

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multiple tax returns at a remote facility on a temporary basis in New Britain.

❖ **INCA Community Services, Inc.** in Tishomingo, Oklahoma operated VITA sites in Atoka, Johnston, Marshall, and Murray counties. At the sites, representatives helped taxpayers who don't normally have to file complete the 1040A form in order to receive the economic stimulus payments being mailed by the IRS to an estimated 100 million taxpayers.



United
Planning
Organization
Tax
Assistance

❖ Southeast Oklahoma residents received an estimated \$1 million in Earned Income Tax Credits as a result of more than 1,400 free tax returns prepared by **Little Dixie Community Action Agency's** (Hugo, Oklahoma) four-member tax return staff. While preparing their taxes, CAA representatives offered information about services such as Weatherization, prescription assistance, and Head Start enrollment.

❖ As of April 6, **Central Arkansas Development Council's** (Benton, Arkansas) Free Tax Preparation/EITC program has served over 580 low and moderate income families and returned over \$165,400 in EITC dollars to working families. "At a time when the forecast for our economy is bleak and when we are all tightening our belts, I'm happy to say that our tax sites are helping people who need an extra paycheck right now," said Larry Cogburn, CADC Executive Director. "Our customers are able to use this money to ease the financial pressures they and their families are under."

❖ **The Utah Community Action Partnership Association** serves as the host organization for Utah's statewide VITA effort. This effort, supplemented through local coalitions hosted by CAAs, helped complete 12,933 tax returns, distribute \$4.8 million in EITC dollars, and over \$.86 million in total tax credits. In addition to providing tax preparation assistance, each VITA site offers programs such as **Utah Saves** and the **Utah Individual Account Network** to provide financial education, support and incentives.

❖ Three banks were on hand to offer new accounts to individuals who came to the **United Planning Organization** in Washington, DC to have their taxes prepared, including 97 year-old Russell Penndleton, the oldest person to have his taxes prepared by UPO. Records for February and March indicate that the CAA helped tax payers receive more than \$108,253 in federal and DC tax refunds, and earned income credits.



Little Dixie Tax Assistance

❖ **Big Five Community Services** in Durant, Oklahoma partners with Southeastern Oklahoma State University's accounting class to provide volunteers at its tax preparation sites, where last year 2,356 returns were prepared. Of those returns, 788 were for the EITC and generated approximately \$1.2 million in EITC refunds. The CAA encourages taxpayers to use their refunds wisely by opening a savings account or putting a down payment on a car or home.

Help Program Participants Receive Their Economic Stimulus Payments

The US Department of Treasury will begin sending economic stimulus payments to more than 130 million households. To receive a payment, taxpayers must have a valid Social Security number, at least \$3,000 of qualifying income and file a 2007 federal tax return. Eligible people will receive up to \$600 (\$1,200 for married couples), and parents will receive an additional \$300 for each eligible child younger than 17.

Millions of retirees, disabled veterans and low-wage workers who usually are exempt from filing a tax return must do so this year in order to receive a stimulus payment. Many of them are in danger of missing out on these valuable stimulus payments. Since they often don't owe income tax and don't usually file a tax return, they may need assistance to file. CAAs can play a key role by getting the word out to these individuals. Talk with your program participants and make sure they have filed a return in order to receive their payments. You can also distribute the attached flyer at your CAA and other key locations in your community.

RESOURCES:

- Internal Revenue Service
Phone 1-866-234-2942;
Web www.irs.gov (click on "Stimulus Payment Rebate Questions")
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities www.cbpp.org/stimuluspayment2008/



May is National Community Action Month!



National Community Action Month in May was developed by the Community Action Partnership to reinforce Community Action Agencies' role helping low-income families achieve economic stability. They truly make the **Promise of Community Action**—to help people and change lives—come alive by hosting events that help put a “face” on the families living in poverty and the dedicated individuals who are helping them escape it.

Success stories are honored, personal achievements are recognized, and many CAAs create “Poster boards” with photos, newspaper articles, and brochures from their National Community Action Month events that are displayed during the Community Action Partnership’s Annual Convention. Some governors even proclaim May “Community Action Month” in their states.



After signing the Community Action Month proclamation, Governor Lynch, third from left, lauded New Hampshire’s Community Action leaders for their work, including (from left to right) Michael Scarpone, Rockingham Community Action; Richard Hayes (holding the proclamation), Strafford County Community Action; Ralph Littlefield, Belknap-Merrimack CAP; Peter Higbee, Tri-County CAP; Deborah Gosselin and Gale Hennessy, Southern New Hampshire Services; and William Marcello, Southwestern Community Services.

National Community Action Month also calls attention to poverty-related problems and the initiatives Community Action Agencies implement to address them. These initiatives are highlighted in **Rooting Out Poverty: A Campaign by America’s Community Action Network**, a new campaign that seeks to reach, educate, and inform every American about the fact that the current extent of poverty is intolerable and correctable.

As Community Action Agencies are showcasing their programs during National Community



New Hampshire Governor John Lynch signed a proclamation declaring May Community Action Month in the state

Action Month, they are also giving local residents – many who are unaware of the poverty in their communities – a firsthand look at the struggles low-income families face and how the solutions and strategies outlined in *Rooting Out Poverty* can help these families achieve financial security. ❖



Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry signed a proclamation declaring May Community Action Month in the state

People in the News

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Compiled by Lisa Holland, Director of Communications, Community Action Partnership



Sranda Watkins and Larry Koziarz

Larry Koziarz and **Sranda Watkins** have joined the Partnership as Director of Training, and Administrative and Membership Services Coordinator, respectively.

Koziarz recently returned from two years in the Peace Corps in Albania, where he worked to assist Non-Governmental Organizations that promoted citizen involvement in local governance and helped the Roma community enroll their children in school and develop small businesses. He has 25 years of experience in the training and grant management fields, and has worked at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, US Department of Labor Women's Bureau, and US Department of Education. Koziarz holds a master's degree in education from Pennsylvania State University and has done post-masters work at the University of Maryland in counseling psychology and higher education administration.

Watkins worked for eight years as a meeting planner at the Council of Chief State School Officers – where she oversaw the planning and development of more than 30 meetings a year – and six years as an executive assistant at the International Chiropractors Association. She also works part-time as a program manager at the Calvary Women's Homeless Shelter in Washington, DC. Watkins, a member of the Association of Meeting Professionals, is pursuing an education degree at the University of the District of Columbia.

Appointments

❖ **Karen Shepard** is the new Executive Director at Monticello Area Community Action Agency in Charlottesville, Virginia. She was previously Executive Director of the Greater Omaha Community Action in Nebraska, a position she held since 2001.



Karen Shepard

❖ **Virginia Spencer** has been named Executive Director of Great Plains Improvement Foundation in Lawton, Oklahoma. She replaces Odell Gunter, who retired in December 2007. Spencer, who has been at the CAA for 20 years, was Gunter's assistant prior to becoming Executive Director. She has also served as a secretary and program planner.



Virginia Spencer

❖ The **Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc.** in Anchorage, Alaska named **Sarah Scanlan** Deputy Director and **Rachel Morse** Development Director. Scanlan previously served as the Deputy Director for the First Alaskans Institute and as a consultant for tribal



Sarah Scanlan
(Photo Credit: Chris Arend)



Rachel Morse
(Photo Credit: RurAL CAP Staff)

and non-profit organizations. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. Prior to joining RurAL CAP, Morse was the executive director of the Bird Treatment & Learning Center and a district manager for the Alaska Soil & Water Conservation District. She

holds a bachelor's degree from Indiana University and master's degree from Purdue University.

❖ The **Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission** in Covington, Kentucky has promoted **Beth Andriacco** to Campbell County Neighborhood Center Supervisor and named **Karen Bishop** Public Information Director, **Lori Brooks** Administrative Assistant for the Stronger Together program, **Lisa Bussey** Housing and Community Development Director, **Kowana Goode** Kenton County Neighborhood Center Supervisor, **Kent Hoxby** YouthBuild Construction Trainer, **Phillip Ridley** YouthBuild Counselor/Case Manager and **Norm Solomon** YouthBuild Director.

Retirements

❖ After decades of service to low-income families through Community Action, **Evelyn Harris** retired last year as Director of the Division of Community Services for the New York Department of State. She exemplified how partnerships can achieve results, and her leadership with local and national Community Action groups leaves a tremendous legacy.



Evelyn Harris,
Former New York
State CSBG Officer,
speaks at her
retirement reception

❖ **Paul Miller** has retired from Community Action of Northeast Indiana in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Miller joined the CAA in 1983 as an administrative assistant, and was most recently Director of Administrative Services.



Paul Miller

People in the News, *continued*

His future plans include studying tax codes so he can prepare taxes for low-income people as part of the city's "Keep More Money in Your Pocket" EITC campaign, and continuing to review Head Start programs nationwide under the auspices of the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Kudos

❖ **Lois Carson**, CCAP, Executive Director of the Community Action Partnership of Riverside County in Riverside, California, was recognized as the 2008 Woman of the Year in California's 62nd District by Assembly Member Wilmer Amina Carter (D-Rialto) for her work in education and helping low-income families change their lives. Carson was honored March 10 at a formal ceremony at the California State Capitol in recognition of Women's History Month.



Lois Carson receives the Woman of the Year Award from California Assemblywoman Wilmer Amina Carter (left) and Speaker of the Assembly-Elect Karen Bass (right)

❖ **Winston Ross**, CCAP, Executive Director of the Westchester Community Opportunity Program in Elmsford, New York, was recently honored by the Yonkers Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Ross, Chairman of the New York State NAACP's ACT-SO



Winston Ross

Youth Program, was recognized for his commitment to civil and human rights. "Winston Ross' commitment to removing barriers from society that prevent equal rights and economic opportunity for all has made a difference not only in Yonkers but New York State and the nation," said Karen Edmonson, Yonkers Branch President.

❖ **Katy Kibbey**, Even Start Program Director at **Wayne-Metropolitan Community Action Agency** in Wyandotte, Michigan has



Katy Kibbey, the 2008 Toyota Family Literacy Teacher of the Year, accepts her award

been named the 2008 Toyota Family Literacy Teacher of the Year. The award, presented to Kibbey during the National Conference on Family Literacy, annually honors an educator selected by NCFL in recognition of his or her individual contributions to improving literacy among youth and adults. She has helped 11 adults obtain their

GED and 15 adult English as a Second Language students reach an English language proficiency level. Elementary children who attend the program with their parents also show significant gains—during the past program year, 96 percent were reading at grade level and students had a school attendance rate of 90 percent.

❖ **Linda Broyles**, Deputy Director of the Southeast Kansas Community Action Program in Girard, Kansas, recently provided testimony in Washington, DC to an eight-member panel convened by the US Department of Health and Human Services. The committee was created in accordance with the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 to develop a reliable system for evaluating the renewal of agencies' designation as Head Start providers. "The committee will be providing critical feedback that will impact every Head Start program in the country," said Broyles. "Ours is recognized as a high quality program and I was pleased to deliver information that will help the panel to meet their mandate."



Linda Broyles



CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

Employees at the Cumberland Community Action Program in Fayetteville, North Carolina pose with the college degrees and professional certificates they received in 2007.

CAAs in the News

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Compiled by Lisa Holland, Director of Communications, Community Action Partnership

❖ The Washington state Community Action Partnership has published Return on Investment, a compilation of stories describing how local CAAs are helping people and changing lives through family development.

❖ Community Action New Mexico has received a \$1,000,000 grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services to further its statewide work in asset development. The grant will fund Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) for low income, working New Mexicans to help them buy a home, pay for their education, or start a small business.

❖ Earlier this year, the Monticello Area Community Action Agency in Charlottesville, Virginia kicked off its Family Economic Security (FES) program. The goal of FES is to provide program participants with a path out of poverty by building their assets. Services include free tax preparation assistance, financial literacy education, and the establishment of Individual Development Accounts.

❖ Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc. has been selected as one of the top ten Best Places to Work in Hawaii with more than 150 employees. MEO was ranked number 10, but was the only not-for-profit in the state and the only Maui company to make the top ten.

❖ Residents and staff of Southern New Hampshire Services' Mary's House, a 40-unit residence in Nashua for homeless women, gather weekly for arts and crafts to promote fellowship. Residents are survivors of substance abuse, mental illness, and domestic violence.

Residents and staff gather at Southern New Hampshire Services' Mary's House



❖ The Minnesota Community Action Partnership, along with several local organizations, has recognized outstanding Community Action initiatives that aim to end poverty in Minnesota. Among the innovative best practices, three focus on building assets within low-income families so they may invest and own a stake in their communities: Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota, Home Repair Individual Development Account, and Rural Family Economic Success.



A student from Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency's charter school receives a dictionary from a member of the Kiwanis Club of Pontiac, Michigan

❖ The Kiwanis Club of Pontiac, Michigan donated personalized dictionaries to third graders at Pontiac Academy for Excellence, Charter School Partner of the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency. The dictionaries feature inspiring quotes and pages filled with useful information, such as the Presidents of the United States, metric to standard conversions, and the Declaration of Independence.

❖ The Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County's (Chicago, Illinois) Near West office sponsors a recreational soccer team for 9-10 year old boys. The CAA provides the team's shirts and attends



CEDA Near West's soccer team gets ready for a game

games for support. "It's wonderful for our organization to have the opportunity to be a part of this team," said Magda Favale, CEDA Near West Director. "After school activities are so important for our community's youth. It's great to see them excited about hard work and having fun at the same time."

❖ The National League of Cities website recently featured ECKAN's (Ottawa, Kansas) Youth in Government program, which is comprised of students in grades 8-12. Members of the program lobbied their city commissioners to enact a Clean Indoor Air Ordinance in Ottawa to promote public health by decreasing citizens' exposure to secondhand smoke.

❖ Lima Allen Council on Community Affairs in Lima, Ohio received the 2007 Oral Health Initiative Best Practice Award for program innovation and outstanding service to the community. The CAA conducts Oral Health Fairs to meet the oral hygiene needs of local children.



A child gets her teeth examined during an oral health fair sponsored by Lima Allen Council on Community Affairs

CAAs, continued on page 30

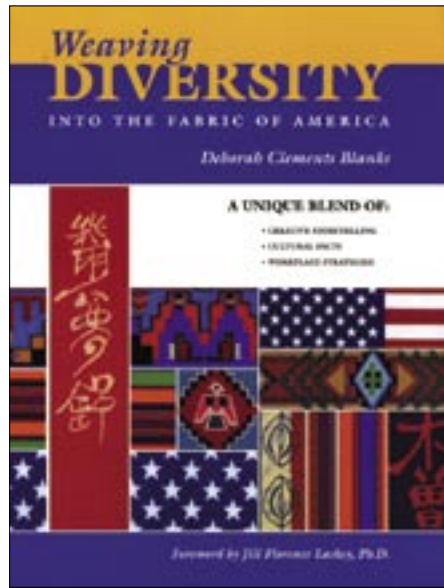
Weaving Diversity into the Fabric of America

By Deborah Clements Blanks, CCAP

Reviewed by Don Mathis, President and CEO, Community Action Partnership

If you're looking for a staff development tool for diversity training that's readable, useful, and not bogged down with arcane data, you'll want to get a copy of **Weaving Diversity Into the Fabric of America**, *Kairo Communications 2001*, by Deborah Blanks, Chief Executive Officer at the Social Development Commission, the Community Action Agency in Milwaukee. This book blends a mix of storytelling, cultural facts, and thoughtful analysis, offering real world analyses and insights into the challenges and issues surrounding diversity.

Ms. Blanks guides us through some step-by-step exercises, role plays, and other activities that produce workplace strategies for maximizing the strengths and differences that we all bring...and grow from. Her goal is not to "provide answers," but rather, to help readers appreciate and understand the vantage



point of others, especially those whose race, ethnicity, and life experiences are different from others around them.

In a sense, **Weaving Diversity** is two books as the last three chapters and

appendices provide very useful information on diversity in the employment and training world. The skills and tips she describes and analyzes are valuable in terms of

recognizing and resolving workplace conflict, differences, and problems.

Ms. Blanks writes, "For America, the challenge is how to accept, appreciate, and utilize the uniqueness of the cultures of its citizens in a way that strengthens the fabric of the nation and maximizes the use of human resources." Her book is a straightforward, honest, and upbeat contribution to that end. ❖

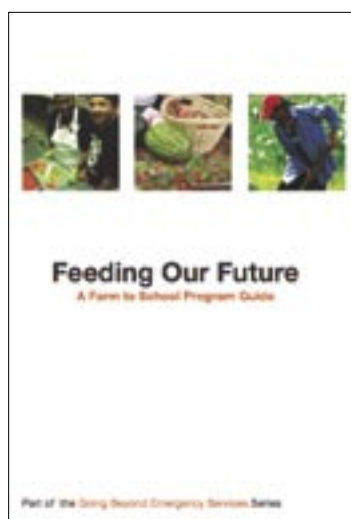


Deborah Blanks

Resources, continued from page 27

a new report released by the National Academy of Social Insurance. The report indicates that Social Security often makes the difference in lifting children out of poverty—1.3 million children were lifted out of poverty by Social Security benefits. "As policymakers consider ways to balance Social Security's long-term finances through benefit cuts, tax increases, or both, many people forget that children and their advocates have an important stake in the policy debate," said Joni Lavery, co-author of the report. To download a copy, go to www.nasi.org.

✓ World Hunger Year has published **Feeding Our Future: A Farm to School Program Guide** for grassroots organizations and community groups to help them create Farm to School Programs in their communities. Farm to School Programs bring food from local farms into schools—helping to increase child nutrition, strengthen



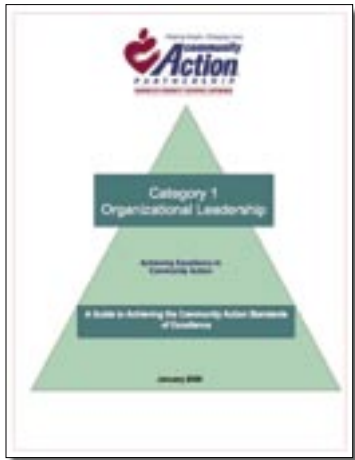
local economies and farms, and educate children and their schools about farms, produce, and food. The guide also profiles four excellent model organizations around the country. To download a copy, go to www.worldhungeryear.org.

✓ In just the last two years, one of every five states has taken action to put

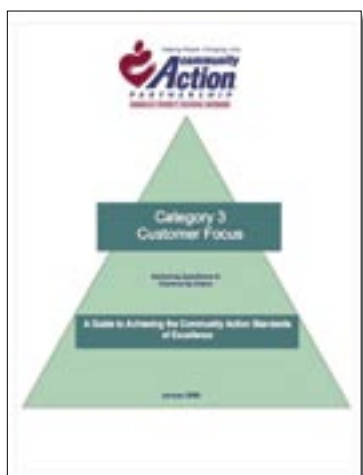
poverty on the political agenda. The Center for Law and Social Policy and Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity have published a new report, **Seizing the Moment: State Governments and the New Commitment to Reduce Poverty in America** that outlines those efforts and provides charts detailing action by policy area. To download a copy, go to www.clasp.org. ❖



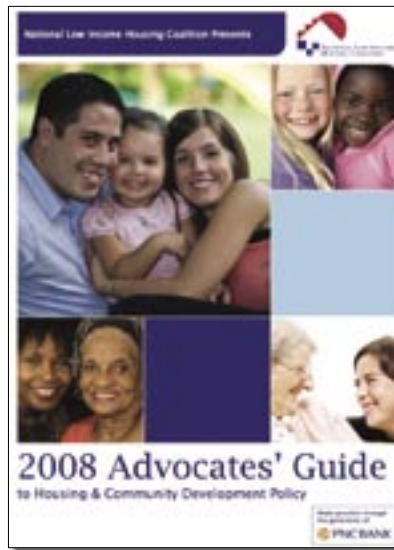
Compiled by Lisa Holland, Director of Communications, Community Action Partnership



✓ The **Community Action Partnership** has developed two **Standards of Excellence Category Guides— Organizational Leadership** (Category 1) and **Customer Focus** (Category 3). These guides demonstrate how to achieve each Standard of Excellence—one of thirty-four of the very best Community Action Agency practices—grouped within seven categories. Over the next few years, the Partnership will develop guides for the other five categories (Strategic Planning, Measurement Management, Human Resources, Organizational Process Management, and Organizational Results). The Category Guides are part of the Excellence program, which is designed to help CAAs strive for and achieve the highest level of quality and service. To download the category guides, go to www.communityactionpartnership.com and click "Excellence."



✓ The National Low Income Housing Coalition has published the **2008 Advocates' Guide to Housing and Community Development Policy**, which provides information on the most relevant housing and community planning issues for advocates, policymakers, and students. Articles in the guide provide background information on a program or issue, and its current status. Where appropriate, advocacy alerts are provided to help advocates weigh in



on particular topics. The appendices are intended to further assist advocates in making their voices heard. To download a copy, go to <http://www.nlihc.org>.

✓ The Center for Economic and Policy Research's new report **Movin' On Up: Reforming America's Social Contract to Provide a Bridge to the Middle Class** synthesizes recent research by CEPR on job quality, economic security, and unionization, and outlines a set of national policy reforms that would make it possible for more struggling families to join the middle class. The report indicates that at least 48 million Americans in working families lack the income needed to gain a toehold in the middle class and that nearly half of all working families falling below a middle class standard of living have incomes that



put them above the official poverty line. The authors conclude that to bring some balance back to the economy and ensure that more people share in the nation's economic prosperity, labor market standards and institutions must be strengthened, access to post-secondary education and training must be expanded, and the system of public and private healthcare benefits must



be reformed. To download a copy, go to www.cepr.net.

✓ While Social Security is best known as a retirement program, it is also irreplaceable life and disability insurance for young families, according to Children's Stake in Social Security,

Rooting Out Poverty, continued

Community Action Association (NYSCAA), featured discussions about *Rooting Out Poverty*. The NYSCAA also plans to meet with New York Governor David Paterson’s key staff and Commissioners to discuss the campaign, the work of Community Action in New York, and how Community Action can be a partner in achieving the Governor’s goals of economic security for all New Yorkers. Denise Harlow, NYSCAA CEO said “*Rooting Out Poverty* has given us a framework within which to discuss



Denise Harlow, CEO of the New York State Community Action Association speaks at the Symposium on Poverty and Economic Security, where *Rooting Out Poverty* was discussed

these vital issues and we look forward to bringing this framework to the Governor’s office.”

Michigan

Michigan’s 30 CAAs are planning to use the report to refine services aimed at improving the lives of low-income families and help them achieve a higher level of self-sufficiency. The report will also serve as a blueprint for structuring a broader approach to poverty reduction, focusing less on emergency services and more on addressing the underlying causes of poverty. “I applaud the Community Action Partnership and support its efforts to reduce poverty in Michigan



Ron Borngesser, President of the Michigan Community Action Agency Association, introduces the *Rooting Out Poverty* campaign during a press conference

and the nation,” said Ismael Ahmed, Director of the Michigan Department of Human Services. “The report and call to action are a ray of hope for a better tomorrow for all Michigan families.”

South Dakota

The **South Dakota Community Action Association** has included “Invest for the Future,” one of the five themes in *Rooting Out Poverty* as a tag line for its statewide Individual Development Accounts program. The association chose to incorporate this theme because it best captures the spirit of the IDA program. Persons participating in the program will literally be investing in their own

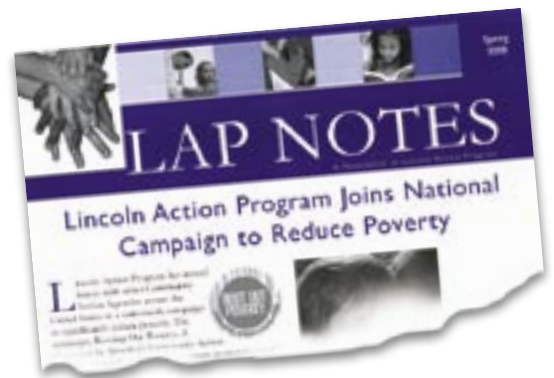


The South Dakota Community Action Association included the tagline “Invest for the Future,” one of the *Rooting Out Poverty* themes, for its statewide Individual Development Accounts program

futures, and the effort they invest at the front end will lead to major improvements in their lives.

Nebraska

- The second annual Poverty Solutions Tour, hosted by Community Action of Nebraska, will include a discussion on *Rooting Out Poverty* and a Poverty Simulation.
- Engaging local leaders, funders, businesses, and the community in the fight against poverty is Lincoln Action Program’s focus of *Rooting Out Poverty*. “We believe it is in



Lincoln Action Program featured *Rooting Out Poverty* on the cover of its newsletter

the community’s best interest to collectively collaborate and partner to root out and eliminate poverty in our community,” said Sue Hinrichs, Executive Director.

Utah

Utah’s Annual Report on Poverty, being prepared by the Utah Community Action Partnership Association, includes recommendations for ending and alleviating the problems of poverty. The association has used some of the proposals from *Rooting Out Poverty* to supplement the report. “We think it will add another dimension and tie our work locally with what is going on across the country,” said Heather Tritten, Executive Director.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

National Fuel Funds Network
National Energy and Utility
Affordability Conference
June 16-18, 2008
Denver, CO
www.nationalfuelfunds.org

CAPLAW
2008 National Training Conference
June 18-20, 2008
Denver, CO
www.capl原因.org

National Council of La Raza
2008 Annual Conference
July 12-15, 2008
San Diego, CA
www.nclr.org

n4a (National Association of
Area Agencies on Aging)
2008 Annual Conference & Tradeshow
July 20-23, 2008
Renaissance Nashville Hotel & Nashville
Convention Center
Nashville, TN

Community Action Partnership 2008 Annual Convention

August 26-29, 2008
Chicago Marriott Magnificent Mile
Chicago, IL
www.communityactionpartnership.com

National Association for State Community
Services Programs (NASCSPP)
2008 Fall Conference
September 9-12, 2008
Hyatt Regency Dearborn
Dearborn, MI
www.nascsp.org

America's Second Harvest –
The Nation's Food Bank Network
Hunger Action Month
September 2008
www.secondharvest.org

National Community Action Foundation
2008 Energy Programs Leveraging Conference
October 27-30, 2008
Vinoy Resort, St. Petersburg, FL



Have you registered yet for the 2008 Annual Community Action Partnership Convention in August? Have you reserved your room at the beautiful Marriott Chicago Downtown Magnificent Mile? Go to www.communityactionpartnership.com for all the latest information.

CAAs in the News, continued from page 25

❖ To help reduce prom costs, **ECKAN's** (Ottawa, Kansas) Volunteer Center sponsored Prom Boutique 2008. Hair consultations, make-up samples, and door prizes were provided for 25 teenage girls as they choose from over 85 formal dresses donated by the community—including one valued at \$500.



A student selects a prom dress at the Prom Boutique sponsored by ECKAN's Volunteer Center

❖ Oak Grove Elementary School formed a partnership with **Crowley's Ridge Development Council** in Jonesboro, Arkansas to provide Zach Tomlinson, a seven year old with severe muscular dystrophy who can't go to school, with greater access to learning opportunities. CRDC pulled multiple funding sources together to purchase a laptop computer for Zach. The school, in turn, purchased the educational software. Zach is now using his computer every day. He has learned how to use the mouse and can open programs by himself from pre-programmed shortcuts.



Zach Tomlinson, who has severe muscular dystrophy, is able to learn thanks to a laptop computer purchased by Crowley's Ridge Development Council

❖ **Blue Mountain Action Council** in Walla Walla, Washington has been named the 2008 Nonprofit Organization of the Year by the Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce. The chamber hailed BMAC for its fiscal stability while helping people achieve self-sufficiency.

❖ **Clinton County Community Action Program** in Wilmington, Ohio was chosen as 2007 Non-profit Organization of the Year by the Clinton County Leadership Institute.

❖ **Southeast Kansas Community Action Program** in Girard, Kansas has expanded their general public transportation services to include a fixed-route shuttle system in the City of Pittsburg. Already the largest rural public transportation provider in Kansas – providing 40,000 rides annually – SEKCAP provided another 25,000 rides through its Pittsburg Area Community Transportation in the past 14 months.



Representatives from local television stations were on hand at CAAs, including Community Action Agency of Siouxland (above left) and Cumberland Community Action Program (below) to educate consumers about the transition from analog to digital television.



❖ The **STOP Organization** (Norfolk, Virginia), **Waccamaw Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.** (Conway, South Carolina), **Community Action Agency of Siouxland** (Sioux City, Iowa), **CSET** (Visalia, California), **Cumberland Community Action** (Fayetteville, North Carolina), and **Vernon Community Action Council** (Leesville, Louisiana) hosted special events during "Experience

the Benefits" Week to help educate consumers about the switch from analog to digital television in 2009. The Community Action Partnership national office has been working with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to educate low-income families about the switch and specifically the TV Converter Box Coupon program—which is designed to offset the costs of the converter boxes that will enable TVs to continue working after the transition.

❖ Eleven individuals from Singapore traveled to Missouri to meet with representatives from the **Missouri Association for Community Action**. Singapore is facing issues that parallel those in Missouri, and the two groups discussed strategies and solutions for solving them. The visit resulted from Lee Kah Howe's attendance two years ago at a Community Action poverty simulation in Jefferson City. Upon returning to Singapore, he convinced the delegation to travel to Missouri to learn more about Community Action.

❖ Members of the City of Houston Police Department recently helped to refurbish the homes of local elderly and disabled residents as a part of a Community Revitalization Project sponsored by **Gulf Coast Community Services Association**. "We actually want the community to know that there are two sides to law enforcement. There's policing and then there's a side that gives back to the community," said Officer Marcella Guidry. "This project is actually close to our hearts."

There are many benefits to membership in Community Action Partnership. Is YOUR membership up to date?

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Residential Treatment Centers/Group Homes

Handicapped/ARC/MRDD/Group Homes

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