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MCA's Mission

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

GCARD assistance to Flint residents recognized

"We're proud of Genesee County Community Action Resource Department's (GCARD) efforts to help bring water filters to Flint residents during the water crisis," says Kate White, MCA executive director.

GCARD played an important logistical role, helping distribute nearly 10,000 water filters to residents in October after lead was discovered in the municipality's water supply. The department is also preparing to distribute replacement filters as the need arises.

Webinar: Case Management 201 -- Part One and Two Coming Up:

Presented by Courtney Kohl, Missouri Association for Community Action

Jan. 20 is the first of a two-part webinar series, Case Management 201, a course designed to benefit the wide variety of front line workers Community Action employs.

This "next level" case management course goes just beyond the basics, but is still applicable to newer case managers. The course will cover client engagement and motivation, interviewing skills, progress notes, healthy boundaries and self-care with integration of a strength-based and multidimensional approach. How each case worker aids in improving client well-being may vary in style and creativity; however, varying approaches should be grounded in the same knowledge base, skills and values.

Case Management 201 presents examples, criteria, templates and frameworks rather than a oneway operation. It provides a model to format current and new practices as each agency sees fit.

Monroe mom works to break cycle of generational poverty



MCA Executive Director Kate White (right), presents award to Jessica Hensley of Monroe.

Raised in subsidized housing, Jessica Hensley Smithers never considered herself a potential homeowner.

"I'm the type of person that, unless you push me, I'll stay in my comfort zone," she says.

She got the push she needed in 2009, while working part time at the Speckled Frog Learning Center in Monroe. Her boss offered all staff members the chance to attend a Bridges out of Poverty class at Monroe County Opportunity Program (MCOP). The class is a step-by-step guide for people living in poverty, highlighting the tools they need to gain self-sufficiency. Participants are given action plans to change their way of thinking in order to break the cycle of poverty.

"About three classes into it, I really dove in and started taking a ton of notes," she recalls. "I took what I had learned and applied it to how I wanted to change my situation."

Using the resources and information from the class, she began by landing full-time employment, then started working on her credit score, which was in the 400s at the time. She took Financial Literacy and Homeowners' Education classes at MCOP, and signed up for the agency's Individual Development Accounts (IDA) Program. Eventually Jessica was able to get her credit score into the upper 600s, meeting the credit score threshold needed to buy a home through the housing program.

She and her husband, Joseph Smithers, were able to purchase a two-story, three-bedroom house in Monroe through MCOP's Neighborhood Stabilization Program. The couple and their three children - Karlee, 9; Kayleigh, 7, and Kinzei, 3 - moved into their home in February 2014.

"I love it," says the 28-year homeowner. "Now I can give our kids the future they need. We all love our new house. We're very happy."

She says her three daughters are her motivation to break the cycle of generational poverty.

"I had a lot of resources offered to me through MCOP and a lot of people behind me," she notes. "I was given the tools I needed to get where I am today."

During 2015, Jessica received a Michigan Community Action Award for her success. She also recently became certified to facilitate the Bridges out of Poverty classes offered by MCOP.

Nominations for 2016 Community Action Awards due in March

MCA will host its annual Community Action Awards presentation April 28 as part of the annual Day at the Capitol event. All member agencies are invited to nominate an agency client and/volunteer for recognition. Winners receive an inscribed trophy and \$100 gift card.

Nomination forms have been sent to all member agencies and are also available on the MCA website at <http://mcaaa.org/media-center/events/mca-day-capitol-and-community-action-awards>

Nominations are due March 11.

Veterans' services address social, emotional and practical issues



Military personnel returning home from deployment often face social, emotional and psychological problems. The constant threat of attack, and perhaps witnessing the injuries and deaths of comrades, is not easily forgotten when a service person returns home. Post traumatic stress disorder has been called one of war's "signature injuries."

Part two of the webinar will be held on Jan. 27 at 10 a.m. ET.

To register for the Jan. 20 webinar, please click [here](#).

To register for the Jan. 27 webinar, please click [here](#).

Did You Know?

Those most affected by the rental housing crisis in Michigan are families with children.

Twenty-eight percent of the total rental population in Michigan pays at least half of their income on rent.

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MCA staff member to offer ROMA training

Program and Policy Specialist **Maddy Kamalay** is entering the final phase of certification as a Results Oriented Management and Accountability trainer and is looking for opportunities to conduct the Introduction to ROMA training curriculum for member agencies.

In this final phase of the certification process, Kamalay and a co-trainer will present the material to a group under the observation of a master ROMA trainer (or videotaped for review of a master trainer). Once she has completed the phase successfully, she will become one of Michigan's few nationally certified ROMA trainers.

If your agency is interested in hosting a training session, please contact Kamalay at mkamalay@michigancommunityaction.org.

Have a Catalyst story idea?

Is there a story or issue you'd like to see covered in Catalyst?

Let us know what's happening in your agency or region. Success stories? Recent events? People news?

We welcome your input and feedback.

Please send your comments and ideas to: [Click Here](#)

Returning veterans often need help making the adjustment to civilian life - finding counseling, jobs, housing and health care. Aging veterans of earlier conflicts and tours of duty face all the same challenges of growing older as the general population, but many do so without the resources of family, retirement income and secure housing, things that help smooth life's passages for their contemporaries. Federal, state and local services can ease such challenges and assist veterans in their transition back into society.

- Nearly 641,000 veterans live in Michigan in 2015, out of a total population of 9.8 million, or 6.6 percent.
- Approximately 1,070 veterans were homeless in Michigan in 2015, an 11.3 percent increase since 2010.
- The unemployment rate for Michigan veterans was 10.6 percent in 2013, higher than the national average.
- Almost half of Michigan veterans are age 65 or older, compared with 17 percent for nonveterans.
- Ninety to 95 percent of homeless veterans no longer accessed homeless services one year later.

To read more about the issue and Michigan Community Action's role, click [here](#).

Walk for Warmth events may surpass 2015 results



As volunteers gear up for 2016 Walk for Warmth events around the state, the success of 2015 encourages fundraising efforts. Last year \$909,225 was raised in dozens of walk events to help low-income households stay warm.

"It's exciting to think we could raise close to a million dollars this year," says Kate White, MCA executive director.

From the western Upper Peninsula to southeast Michigan, the annual walks drew those who wanted to help other families in their communities with their heating bills.

Community Action Agencies have a long history of providing utility assistance and weatherization services to help qualified low-income families cope with the cost of utilities. Where more affluent households might spend 7 to 10 percent of income on utility bills, low-income families have to dedicate approximately a quarter of their income to cover heat and electricity.

Consumers Energy provides a list of upcoming walk dates as well as start locations, available [here](#).

Join colleagues March 15-18 in Washington, D.C., for NCAF'S Legislative Conference

National Community Action Foundation's annual legislative conference hosts congressional speakers and other national leaders who discuss what's going on in Washington.

The conference is a great opportunity for those in Community Action to come to Washington and meet with their representatives, other congressional leaders and national Community Action champions.

Prior to the conference, NCAF will work with participants to prepare for their Hill meetings. It will also have a special session Wednesday for Hill prep.

When: March 15-18, 2016

Where: Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill

For more information, please visit the website by clicking [here](#).

To register, please click [here](#).

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