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**MCA's Mission**

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

**MCA 2016 summer conference to be held July 19-21**

With more national speakers this year than ever before, MCA's 2016 Summer Conference is a great investment in learning and networking.

The conference will be held from **July 19 to July 21** at the Blue Water Convention Center in Port Huron.

Model programs, organizational standards and agency entrepreneurship will be among the topics featured at the conference.

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

**Community Action employee celebrates 50 years of service**



Mary Durham at ACSET  
Community Action in Grand Rapids

CAAs across the country will celebrate 52 years of service in August, commemorating President Lyndon B. Johnson's signing of the Economic Opportunity Act on Aug. 20, 1964. For the CAA in Kent County, this year marks another special anniversary: the 50th year of service for staff member Mary Durham.

As the oldest of 11 children, Durham grew up helping her mother. As a Community Action employee, she helps members of her community.

Durham joined Kent Community Action Partnership on June 12, 1966. Her first job entailed going door-to-door to inform the community about available services, as well as driving people to appointments with other agencies, such as the Health Department or the Department of Social Services.

In the 50 years since Durham started working for Community Action, she has watched her CAA grow in size and impact. Last year the agency served more than 6,000 individuals, 3,000 families, 2,000 seniors and 1,600 children through its various programs.

"We used to work more with people in person," says Durham. "Now we work more on the phone and online, which helps because there are so many more people with needs."

While many things have changed over time, Durham notes that the one constant is providing help for those who need it in the community.

"Helping was the thing, and it still is," says Durham.

**Catalyst survey results generate positive feedback**

Nearly two-thirds of Catalyst subscribers read the newsletter every month, according to a recent survey conducted by Michigan Community Action. The survey sought feedback regarding the Catalyst newsletter and recommendations for possible improvements. It was sent to 438 people and accumulated a total of 51 responses over the course of six weeks.

The survey aimed to determine the value of content within Catalyst, the number of times respondents forwarded Catalyst and the ideal frequency for the newsletter. Suggestions for improvement were also requested.

Results showed agency/program

**CAA helps parents of children with cystic fibrosis find balance**



Head Start the pediatric Midland family with support and resources.

With two young children with cystic fibrosis, Sara and Tim Enszer of Midland faced daily challenges providing care to their children, including occasional hospital stays.

The family turned to Mid Michigan Community Action Agency's (MCAA) Head Start program to receive weekly home visits and ongoing evaluation of the children's speech and motor skills. The Enszers received practical support, training for emergency situations, and budgeting time and resources for their children's needs.

The holistic approach led to major improvements in the family's health, economic and social conditions.

With MCAA's help, the Enszers have been able to balance medical appointments, speech therapy, playgroup and home visits while still finding time for family.

The Enszers were among five individuals or families honored from across the state during the annual Michigan Community Action Awards Ceremony held at the Capitol in Lansing in April. The awards are presented to clients who overcame economic and social challenges.

*Editor's note: Community Action Agencies interact on a daily basis with people who have successfully worked to overcome hardships. These are stories worth celebrating. If you have an inspiring story you'd like to share, please contact us at 517-321-7500.*



The Michigan Alliance for Lead Safe Homes (MIALSH), led by Michigan Environmental Council staff, at the state Capitol for Lead Education Day.

**Reducing lead, creating healthy homes**

MCA joins the Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes (OLHCH) in calling on local Community Action agencies to join the effort to empower families to create the healthiest home possible during National Healthy Homes Month (NHHM).

"The connection between healthy homes and affordable homes is a foundational step on the path out of poverty," says MCA Executive Director Kate White. "Good health is a key part of economic security. We can't get to self-sufficiency without a healthy place to live."

NHHM aims to boost awareness and understanding of federal and local resources available to households regardless of their location. The campaign also serves as an opportunity to highlight the dangers of residential hazards and to celebrate the success of the healthy homes community. OLHCH recently made more than 190,000 housing units nationwide lead-safe as a result of its grant program.

Partner agencies are being asked to participate by promoting NHHM activities on social media, hosting programs and activities that enhance public awareness of home health and safety hazards, and distributing marketing materials prepared by OLHCH. NHHM is committed to providing a deliberate, coordinated and holistic approach to creating healthy and safe homes.

Further background information and marketing materials for NHHM can be found in the toolkit

<http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=NHHMToolkitFinal.pdf>.

**MCA supports MEAP renewal**



Home weatherization is an example of energy conservation efforts.

Fostering self-sufficiency is at the heart of Michigan Community Action's support for legislation that ensures low-income residents will continue to rely on the Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP).

MEAP legislation was recently renewed, ensuring that low-income households will continue to have access to the program. MCA Executive Director Kate White says the organization supports the legislation because the MEAP program helps strapped families pay utility bills that consume large portions of their income, and shows them how to reduce and budget for their energy costs.

"The ultimate goal of both MCA and MEAP is to provide low-income, disabled and other families in tough circumstances with a way to move toward economic independence," White explains. "We thank legislators for recognizing the importance of MEAP."

**Community Action agencies are resources for nursing mothers**



Gov. Snyder signs "Breastfeeding Anti-Discrimination Act"

Community Action Agencies can serve as a resource for clients who need to obtain support from their employers for breastfeeding. MCA is partnering with the Michigan Breastfeeding Network in its campaign to raise awareness and support for breastfeeding women in the workplace.

Under the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#), businesses with more than 50 employees are required to provide break time to nursing mothers separate from their regular breaks. Businesses are also required to provide nursing mothers with a private location other than a restroom for the expression of milk.

"Going back to work is a common reason that working women stop breastfeeding," says Jane Whitacre, executive director of MIBFN. "When employers are supportive of the needs of working mothers, the business and the mom benefits. MIBFN works to promote state and community support of breastfeeding. Our efforts include advocacy, education and coalition building."

"MCA endorses the rights of women to breastfeed and wants to see the practice normalized in America's work places," says MCA Executive Director Kate White. "MCA is taking the first step by becoming a breastfeeding friendly workplace. We will also work with the coalition to spread the message to other industries and networks that we influence. We encourage CAAs to do the same."

White notes the campaign will improve the health of communities by reaching areas where breastfeeding is less common and where support

success stories ranked as the most important information among readers. Catalyst content was found to be at least "somewhat valuable" to about 65 percent of respondents, and approximately 55 percent have forwarded the newsletter to staff members or colleagues in the past year. More than half of the respondents also want Catalyst to continue distribution on a monthly basis.

A few respondents had suggestions for improvement, such as spotlight articles, visible association and individual agency priorities and goals, and a "best practices" column.

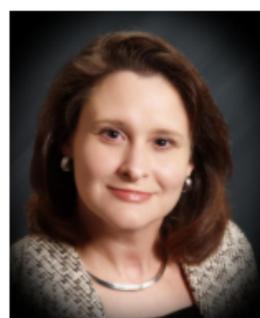
"MCA will continue to incorporate the suggestions made by our members and focus on best practices from our Michigan members and colleagues across the country in ending poverty," says MCA Executive Director Kate White.

for women breastfeeding is lacking.

M BFN has a number of resources available for employers, employees, health care providers and advocates. For further information and sample workplace toolkits, visit <http://www.mbreastfeeding.org>.

## Collaboration harnesses collective energy, gets results

by Kate White, MCA Executive Director



Given the many issues affecting low-income people in Michigan - including access to affordable energy, safe and affordable housing and in-home services for Michigan's seniors - Michigan Community Action gets involved in a number of statewide coalition efforts working to advance specific issues. Our involvement in state coalitions aligns well with the new national Community Action goals proposed earlier this year.

1. Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security;
2. Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offered economic security;
3. People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.

We know that collaboration is often instrumental in achieving results. When we can harness the energy and ideas of many agencies and individuals, we can accomplish much more than we may be able to do on our own.

As founding members of the **Keep Michigan Warm Coalition**, MCA has been actively working to improve the availability of financial and human resources to meet the energy assistance needs of Michigan's low-income households. Along with many of our Community Action Agencies across the state, we advocate for positive public policy and promote public education on key issues.

Through the **Michigan Alliance for Lead-Safe Homes**, we work with a group of concerned health, housing and environmental professionals, local business owners, community and child advocates, parents and others committed to reducing and eliminating childhood lead poisoning and its adverse effects. The coalition's goal is to identify a stable and renewable source of funding to provide education, testing of children and abatement of lead hazards in homes.

As a member of the **Silver Key Coalition**, MCA is helping to advocate for an increase in state funding for in-home services. The coalition's goal is to eliminate wait lists experienced by thousands of older Michiganders who rely on services such as home-delivered meals and in-home care.

We are also part of the **Michigan Breastfeeding Network**, which organizes and supports local community breastfeeding coalitions and works to advance public education about the benefits of breastfeeding for children, parents and employers.

As partners in each of these coalition efforts, MCA staff and local agency leaders spend considerable time and donate their knowledge and resources to each issue. We thank them for helping to make each of these coalitions stronger.

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## Catalyst welcomes input, story ideas

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

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

We welcome your input and feedback. Please send your comments and ideas to:

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