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**MCA's Mission**

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

MCA board, committees meet Sept 12

Finance Committee meeting
11 a.m. to noon

Directors Council meeting
1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Board of Directors meeting
3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

All meetings held at MCA's office,
2173 Commons Parkway, Okemos,
MI.

Kalamazoo County names new CAA manager

Amber Leverette has been named CAA manager for Kalamazoo County. Previously Leverette had worked as a program assistant there and later served as agency housing director. She is a National Certified ROMA Trainer (NCRT). Leverette replaces Charlotte Smith, who has been promoted to deputy director of Kalamazoo County's Community Services Department.

New York CAA offers Excel webinars

In order to help its members gain proficiency in managing and analyzing data, MCA has engaged the New York Community Action Agency Association to conduct two webinars on Microsoft Excel.

The first session, "Excel Formatting and List Management", will focus on formatting and presenting data sets. It will also provide information on creating and sorting lists in Excel. Participants will learn how to draw the viewer's eyes to the most important data in their workbooks. The session will be held on Sept 21.

The second session, "Excel Charts, Graphs and Pivot Tables," will teach participants to make concise summaries out of unorganized data. It will focus on selecting and tailoring the appropriate charts for data sets. The session will be held on Sept 28.

Both sessions begin at 10 a.m. To register for the webinars, [click here](#).

NCAF sets 2017 conference dates

Community Action members can meet with their congressional delegation, as well as other members of congressional leadership and national Community Action champions, **March 14-17** at the 2017 National Community Action Foundation (NCAF) Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.

The conference hosts congressional speakers and other national leaders who discuss current events in Washington and their relation to Community Action. Further information and instructions on how to register will be available soon.

MCA Officers/Board Members 2015-2017

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Northwest Michigan CAA
Louis Piszker
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Wayne Metro CAA
Jill Sutton
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Mid Michigan CAA

Urban builders academy gives students career opportunities

Urban Builders Academy students help build new home, hone their trades skills.

It may be called classroom time, but the sounds of hammers, drills and saws make Saginaw County Community Action Committee's new program, Urban Builders Academy, feel more like an opportunity for transformation.

The program began July 25 for its first-ever group of students and is the result of collaboration between Saginaw CAC and the Greater Michigan Construction Academy (GMCA).

"The plan is to help introduce individuals to skilled trades and then try to get them placed or help them become their own employer," says Saginaw CAC Deputy Director **Tracy Thompkins**.

According to Saginaw CAC's research, the average age of a skilled trades worker is 59. In the next decade, the number of retiring workers is expected to spike and create a larger deficit.

Thompkins says it's all about creating jobs and encouraging interest in them.

Applicants must be participants of the Saginaw CA center either through its volunteer program or support services, and must meet an eighth- or ninth-grade math proficiency level.

"We don't know what their interests are so we're not going to predispose them to a particular trade," says **Jimmy Greene**, CEO of the Greater Michigan Chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors. "We give them a hands-on approach to eight trades, including electrical, plumbing, carpentry and HVAC (heating, ventilation and air-conditioning). We're training skilled trades people, and specialization is up to them."

Program participants also receive training in map and blueprint reading as well as job interview skills. Graduates will leave the program with a nationally accredited pre-apprentice certificate in skilled trades, which will allow them to find work or continue training in states outside Michigan.

"What's interesting about what they're learning is they're picking up the same skills as anyone else who'd enter a trade skills program," Greene says. "The course is modified and paced out, but there are the same core modules as someone who would pay to attend a trade school."

Thompkins says the future of Urban Builders Academy could involve collaboration with other Saginaw CAC programs.

"When we started the program we discussed hiring graduates to help Saginaw's seniors with minor home repairs. Often the cost of an actual licensed contractor is too expensive for seniors. Having our guys help instead would be a great example of the success they can have."

Weatherization Month in October also marks 40 years of WAP

Caulking windows just one way to save energy.

October is Weatherization Month, an opportunity to speak to state and local leaders about the benefits of Weatherization Assistance Programs (WAP).

"Community Action Agencies know the importance of weatherization," says **Kate White**, MCA executive director. "As low-income families spend less on their heating bills, they free up money that can be used for other necessities, such as education and job training."

As MCA marks WAP's 40th year of helping Michigan families, it notes that more than 600,000 homes are warmer and safer thanks to weatherization efforts. With National Weatherization Day Oct. 30, MCA is grateful to legislators and policymakers for their four decades of WAP support.

"It is important as Community Action Agencies to spread awareness about the benefits of WAP," White says. "CAAs provide not only WAP services but information on weatherization benefits for homeowners and renters. MCA thanks legislators for their continued support of WAP and dedication to combating poverty in Michigan."

For more information on WAP and supplementary educational materials, visit [mcaa.org](#).

Watch video**Deconstructing vacant houses helps build workers' skills**

House disappears in minutes as crews deconstruct.

Learning to deconstruct blighted houses is leading some unemployed workers to new jobs. After completing OLHSA's 12-week certification course in blight removal, deconstruction and workplace safety, the men and women tackle condemned properties and deconstruct them, salvaging furniture, electrical fixtures and hardwood. Efforts to train workers have expanded to carpentry, and OLHSA will soon sell the resulting products. [Click here](#) to watch!

Annual NASCSPP conference offers strategic training

Professionals from across the country will come together Sept. 28-30 for the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP) 2016 Annual Training Conference in Omaha, Nebraska.

Participants may choose from two educational tracks. The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) track will focus on HHS CSBG initiatives and best practices related to anti-poverty efforts, performance management and performance measurement. The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) track will focus on Department of Energy WAP initiatives and grantee management issues.

In addition to NASCSPP training, the Office of Management Budget (OMB) Uniform Guidance Training will take place Sept. 27 and will focus on the 10 biggest changes in the new guidance. The interactive seminar will cover practical ways to address the new requirements and point out areas to increase efficiency in organizational operations.

The conference takes place at the Hilton Omaha. For more information on sessions, or to register, [click here](#). For questions about the event, contact [Raymond Thomas](#), NASCSPP's program manager.

Toby Berry

At-Large Officer

Community Action Agency

Arthur F enrick

Lower Peninsula Rural Officer

Southwestern Michigan CAA

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Gogebic Ontonagon CAA

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Catalyst welcomes input, story ideas

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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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Michigan Community Action
2173 Commons Parkway
Okemos, MI 48864
Phone: 517.321.7500
Fax: 517.321.7504
info@mcaaa.org