

In This Issue...

SMCAA Partners with Benton Harbor in Home Rehab

Volunteers help keep the heat on

March is a Busy Month for Advocacy

CAA employees can save on tuition, degree programs at Capella University

Announcements

Upcoming Events

Did you know?

Quick Links

[MCA Website](#)

[Summer Conference Registration](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Legislative Priorities](#)

[CAAs in the News](#)

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MCA's Mission

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

Announcements

2018 Summer Conference Registration Now Open

The registration form for the 2018 Summer Conference is now available. You can find it on the MCA website by clicking [here](#).

CAAM Seeks Executive Director

CAAM is seeking applicants for the position of Executive Director. Applications due by Friday, March 9, 2018. For further details [click here](#).

CLMCAA seeks executive director

CLMCAA of Chippewa, Luce and Mackinac Counties is seeking a full-time executive director/CEO. The CEO is responsible for the oversight and administration of programmatic and fiscal operations of the agency, which has approximately 200 employees. A complete job description is available [here](#).

MCA Releases 2017 Annual Report

MCA has released its annual report for 2017. To view the PDF, [click here](#).

For a full list of announcements, visit MCA's website.

Upcoming Events

NCAF Legislative Conference March 20-23

Community Action members still have time to register for the National Community Action Foundation (NCAF) 2018 Legislative Conference March 20-23 in Washington, D.C. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet with their congressional delegation and hear legislative insights from other members of congressional leadership and national Community Action champions.

The conference will highlight ways to create new legislative opportunities for the Community Action network. Visit [ncaf.org](#) or contact your local CAA for registration information.

CAAs hold Walks for Warmth

Community Action Agencies throughout the state will be holding local Walk for Warmth events to help raise money for low-income households that need heating assistance. A complete schedule of events can be found [here](#).

For a full list of events, visit MCA's calendar.

Did you know?

Military personnel returning home from deployment often face social, emotional and psychological problems. They need help finding counseling, jobs, housing and health care. Community Action Agencies in Michigan can help! Through programs such as homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing, homeless veterans may receive assistance in identifying underlying causes of homelessness, access to mainstream benefits and resources, obtaining safe and affordable permanent housing and employment skill building.

Catalyst welcomes input, story ideas

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

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

We welcome your input and feedback. Please send your comments and ideas [here](#).

MCA Officers/Board Members 2017-2019

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Mid Michigan CAA

Louis Piszker
Vice President
Wayne Metro CAA

Michelle Williamson
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Toby Berry
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SMCAA Partners with Benton Harbor in Home Rehab



Benton Harbor residents can get help for minor home repairs thanks to partnership with Southwest Michigan CAA.

Ensuring the health and safety of residents is the mission of a new partnership between the city of Benton Harbor and Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency (SMCAA).

The city has selected SMCAA to administer a home rehabilitation program that it is restarting after seven years of dormancy.

"We haven't had a partnership with the city of Benton Harbor in a very long time," said **Sandy Klank**, manager of housing development for SMCAA. "We're most excited about the opportunity to help out the people of the community."

Klank said the city asked SMCAA to administer the program based on its long track record of successfully overseeing similar housing improvement initiatives for Berrien, Cass, Van Buren, Allegan and St. Joseph counties.

The Benton Harbor program is expected to go into operation by April. In the meantime, SMCAA is working with the city to educate residents about the opportunity and lining up contractors to complete home repairs.

"We've got a lot of work to do in the community, and we're just at the beginning," Klank said.

The program is slated to operate through June 2019 with \$170,000 in federal Community Development Block Grant funding, although the city has indicated it could devote additional CDBG funds to extend the initiative, Klank said.

Through the program, residents who meet income and other requirements could qualify for no-interest, low-payment loans to fund various home improvement projects possibly involving exterior siding, lead or asbestos abatement, bathroom fixtures, flooring, electrical systems or plumbing, she said.

Klank added that the counties SMCAA assists with similar programs provided Benton Harbor with glowing recommendations about the agency's work. Funding for those programs comes from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

The goal of both the county-level and Benton Harbor programs is the same: to help improve the quality of living for residents and stabilize or boost property values in communities, she said.

Volunteers help keep the heat on



Volunteers at Michigan CAAs can streamline the intake process for MEAP applicants.

More clients in need of energy assistance are getting help thanks to volunteers lending their time at Community Action Agencies.

At Mid-Michigan Community Action (MMCAA), the CAA serving a six-county area and headquartered in Farwell, a volunteer is the first person to meet and greet applicants for the Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP). Paperwork and processing applications take time, so volunteers really help speed up the process.

"We have only one case manager in each office, so volunteers have been critical in the intake effort for residents applying for assistance for MEAP or LCA," explains **Jill Sutton**, MMCAA executive director. In 2017, MMCAA provided energy assistance to about 1,200 people in the six counties it covers – Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Mecosta, Midland, and Osceola.

At EightCAP in Greenville, volunteers from AARP assisted approximately **330** households in completing a portion of the certification process for utility assistance. Volunteers also assisted an additional **615** households with LIHEAP paperwork. EightCAP serves Gratiot, Ionia, Isabella and Montcalm counties.

"Volunteers are an integral part of the system that ensures consumers who are facing a heating emergency receive the assistance they need to stay warm," explains **Christa Jerome**, manager of Self-Sufficiency Programs at EightCAP. Volunteers assist EightCAP staff by contacting vendors for price quotes and invoices for deliverable fuels, including propane, fuel oil, wood and pellets.

Sutton says her agency took a big step forward when it budgeted for a part time volunteer coordinator position. She adds that the agency uses Facebook to recruit and maintain volunteers.

March is a Busy Month for Advocacy



MCA's Chere Coleman participates in NCAF Conference.

As Congress debates whether critical programs that help Michigan families will continue to be funded, Community Action Agencies and their state associations are planning a series of events and meetings to highlight the importance of safety net programs to the economic survival of low income Americans.

Beginning March 7, CAAs are participating in nationwide "tweet storm," highlighting the importance of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) in helping economically distressed families become more self-sufficient and stable. President Trump's proposed budget zeroes out the CSBG without providing any plans to replace funding for Community Action programs that millions of families rely on for support. The social media campaign will continue throughout the month.

Then, on March 13 Michigan Community Action will join members of the National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition in Washington, D.C., to advocate for the continuation of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). LIHEAP helps qualified families pay utility bills and to make their homes safer and more energy efficient, and like CSBG, is slated for future drastic cuts. More than 70 percent of LIHEAP recipient households include at least one vulnerable person, such as a senior aged 60 or older, a child age 5 or younger, or an individual with a disability. NEUAC is urging Congress to restore the LIHEAP appropriation to at least \$4.7 billion, to concentrate funds in base grants, and reject efforts that siphon appropriated funds from LIHEAP's core energy-assistance mission.

Finally, Michigan Community Action representatives will travel to the nation's Capital during the week of March 19 to take part in the National Community Action Foundation Legislative Conference. MCA leaders will meet with members of the Michigan delegation and urge their support for funding for multiple community action programs.

CAA employees can save on tuition, degree programs at Capella University



CAA employees have access to education benefits through a partnership between Capella University and MCA.

Take advantage of a \$4,000 Grant and other financial incentives from Capella University through April, 2018!

It's your journey. But we're here with you every step. With 54 degree programs and more than 155 specializations, in bachelor's, master's, doctorate and certificate levels, an online degree from Capella University is within reach. Earn your degree faster, for less than you thought possible. Gain skills and move your career forward with a bachelor's in Business, Information Technology, Nursing, Health Sciences, Criminal Justice, Psychology, and more.

In partnership with Capella University, Michigan Community Action employees and immediate family members are eligible for significant financial and educational benefits, such as:

- **50% off** your first 12-week session in the revolutionary FlexPath learning format by April 2018
- **10% tuition discount** on all Capella degree programs
- **\$4,000 grant** for those who enroll and start an eligible GuidedPath program by April 2018
- Credit for your professional certificates and prior learning

For all partnership discounts and benefits visit [Capella.edu/MichiganCommunityAction](#)

Important information about the educational debt, earnings, and completion rates of students who attended these programs.