

# OACAA *briefing*

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## Community Action putting people back to work

The Greater Dayton Area has been hard hit by layoffs and business closures resulting from the auto industry's much discussed decline. Four displaced auto workers have found new careers in the Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP) at Community Action Partnership of the Greater Dayton Area (CAP Dayton) and completed new employee orientation July 6.

The new positions were made possible by increases in HWAP funding from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA).

Tony Watkins knows he was lucky. He was laid off just this past April after nearly 14 years at DistTech Inc. where he worked as a tank washer.

Elliott Brown was laid off from Plastech in September after working for 18 months in

both assembly and inspection. Nathaniel Jones was on the Delphi assembly line for two years before he was displaced in July 2008.

Darrell Allen was laid off from Delphi's assembly line in April 2007. He had been there since 1994.

To make ends meet, the four tried everything from trimming trees to refurbishing houses. Allen went through heating and air conditioning training but couldn't find a job.

"Everybody wants you to have experience but nobody will hire you so you can get experience," he said.

Even the CAP Dayton official conducting orientation can be considered a displaced worker. Human Resources Director Latricia Milhouse voluntarily separated in January from an uncertain future with ABX Air in Wilmington. She has been at



**Nathaniel Jones (left) and Tony Watkins are two of four new HWAP employees who went through orientation at CAP Dayton this week. All four were displaced from the auto industry as GM closed its Dayton facilities.**

CAP Dayton since May 19.

Milhouse said another four new weatherization employees would be going through orientation this month. CAP Dayton is adding a total of 30 positions as a result of its ARRA funding. To date, the Ohio

Association of Community Action Agencies (OACAA) has documented creation of more than 200 jobs in its members' HWAP programs as a result of increased funding from ARRA. For more information, visit [www.oacaa.org](http://www.oacaa.org).

## Using contractors may help with ARRA workload

Community Action Agencies providing Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP) services have seen their programming budgets and goals jump to new levels as a result of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA). The increase in funding – and ability to help people on an unprecedented scale – has brought along a series of new challenges.

Agencies concerned about the increased workload might consider something they previously have not done: using contractors to complete some or all of the work.

"I think with the ARRA money, a lot of agencies are going to blend in-house crews with the use of contractors," said Andy Binegar, Home Improvement Manager for Pickaway County Community Action Organization, a contractor-based HWAP program. "The biggest key is you've got to have more options."

Kim Parker, Energy Director for Stark County Community Action, said his program shifted from in house crews to contractors five years ago. In house crews were struggling to meet production and Parker was struggling to find and keep a stable workforce. With contractors, the program is stronger, he said.

"I'm sold on it. It has been very rewarding," Parker added.

Publicity regarding the ARRA funding has made finding **interested** contractors easy. Finding **qualified** contractors is another matter, both directors said.

"You've got everybody from home builders to a man around the corner who heard there was an opportunity to make some money," Parker said. "Nine out of ten are going to be someone who has no weatherization experience and that's the challenge."

Parker recommends starting out by defining standards for the contractors. Agencies with existing in house crews have standards for their employees related to training, work quality, insurability, etc. Anyone considered for a contractual relationship should meet the same standards.

Both Stark and Pickaway use an extensive application process and a contractual agreement approved by the Ohio Department of Development (which is required). The application process is critical in both programs and includes items such as credit checks, references, descriptions of work experience, and insurance information.

Parker noted that anyone stating they have a license is asked to produce a copy.

*Continued on page 3*

**Visit the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies online at [www.oacaa.org](http://www.oacaa.org).**

# Agency leveraged stimulus to occupy vacant buildings

Denise Birt looks at the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) as a chance to enhance and strengthen Tri-County Community Action and the communities it serves.

"I look at it as a window of opportunity to build programs that will generate their own funding streams after the ARRA funds are expended," she said.

Birt has begun by leveraging ARRA funds with her unrestricted corporate dollars to acquire a new building for her Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP). HWAP providers around the state are receiving a total of \$267 million in ARRA funds resulting in job creation and new equipment purchases. The additional personnel and equipment has left some agencies looking for larger spaces.

Birt found exactly what her HWAP department needed in a four-building complex located at 1771 County Road 130, approximately one mile west of Bellefontaine in Logan County. The building, occupied by Tri-County on June 29, includes 3,000 square feet of office space and 12,000 square feet of covered parking for the fleet of new vehicles. An additional 9,000 square feet of storage areas are heated, providing good conditions for keeping weatherization materials such as bales of cellulose.

Another building will house materials for health and safety work, as well as large equipment items owned by the



**This complex of four buildings on County Road 130 near Bellefontaine is no longer empty thanks to Tri-County Community Action. The agency moved its Home Weatherization Assistance Program into the complex June 29.**

department. The fourth building will also be used for storage. Although the buildings were purchased with corporate funds, the HWAP program will use some of its ARRA money to pay rent to the Tri-County corporate fund in a plan that has already been approved by the Ohio Department of Development, Birt said.

The complex has been vacant for several years and needed sprucing up. Work before the move included mowing, painting and general cleaning. Some security and technology upgrades were also accomplished, again with corporate dollars. More importantly, for Birt, there is one less vacant building in her community.

"It's nothing glamorous, but it definitely will work well for weatherization," she said.

Birt has also been able to take advantage of ARRA funding disbursed to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). She received a \$2.6 million grant to rehabilitate her main facility at 315 W. Auburn Ave. in Bellefontaine to exclusively serve her transportation program. An additional \$260,000 of ARRA funds will purchase four vehicles, mechanics tools, and computer hardware and software.

Tri-County's main office is attached to an 18<sup>th</sup> century hearse factory, most of which will be demolished under the grant plan. Birt would love to save the history-laden building, but instead will use salvaged brick and other materials from it to create pillars and walkways around the rehabilitated facility.

The office facility attached to the former hearse factory and the salvageable portion of the facility are also going green, she added. Examples include geo-thermal heat and energy-efficient lighting. Additional rehabilitation efforts will include: restroom upgrades, a new driver break room, staff training room, and a tool crib. The grant will also fund the purchase and installation of a hydraulic lift and tools to create a maintenance shop in the facility.

"We'll be able to service our entire fleet here and right now that's outsourced for our 46 vehicles" Birt said. "The ARRA funds will help us to reduce overhead and operating costs, further enabling us to increase service levels, improve working conditions for our staff, create and save jobs, and help our communities."

Equally important to Birt, however, is the impact the rehabilitation will have on the community.



**This 18th century era factory on West Auburn Avenue in Bellefontaine was once used to manufacture hearses. Tri-County Community Action has received a grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation to demolish most of the building and refurbish its salvagable portions as a facility for its Logan County transportation program. The \$2.6 million grant will help revitalize the neighborhood.**

**Continued on page 4**

# Dayton agency moves HWAP to vacant bakery

Leonard Florence planned for the purchase of a 1930s bakery facility for his weatherization program before the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) was passed. Now, the director of Community Action Partnership in Dayton's Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP) is glad to have the space to safely store his new vehicles and equipment.

The bakery at 947 Ludlow Street stopped producing loaves of Wonder Bread several years ago but still served as a distribution facility for Interstate Bakery. Interstate also operated an outlet store at the facility until about a year ago, just before CAP Dayton bought

it. Florence said the agency took ownership in December and the original purpose of the purchase was to be able to park his fleet indoors for better security. He is also glad to have the additional storage space, however. He currently has storage of materials, supplies and vehicles spread out among three different buildings that total approximately 5,000 square feet. The bakery is 79,000 square feet.

CAP Dayton is receiving \$18 million in ARRA funds for HWAP over the next two years and will add a total of 30 employees. Additionally, Florence expects to weatherize 2,000 homes this year, up from

**Continued on page 4**



CAP Dayton's HWAP program is gradually moving into this former bakery at 947 Ludlow Street in downtown Dayton. The bakery has been empty for several years. An outlet store closed shortly before the agency purchased the building in 2008.

## Using contractors....

**Continued from page 1**

Sometimes just by asking this series of questions, he said, unqualified contractors will fall away from the process.

Training is the next step. Contractors not willing to have their people trained simply won't meet the performance standards, Parker said. However, being trained and performing high quality work will benefit the contractor's bottom line, he noted.

"We do not make any guarantees as to how much work contractors will get but if they're performing to program standards, they will get work," Parker said. "It will have a residual affect on their retail business as well. We have had contractors tell us they have gotten more customers because they perform at a higher level."

For many contractors, working under a government regulated program is a new experience. Binegar stressed communication as critical in a contractor-based program.

"You have to be clear," he said. "There are rules they have to follow that they are not used to. At the same time, you have to be somewhat flexible and acknowledge the fact that they

are used to working on their own."

Binegar recommends taking advantage of every opportunity to communicate with a contractor. He also said he feels fortunate to have former Community Action Agency employees among his contractors because they understand the system. Parker also believes in sharing tips, updates and recommendations he receives from the Community Action network.

Both Binegar and Parker stressed internal quality control. They each have inspectors on staff who perform the final quality check on all projects.

"You have to have your internal people in place," Parker said. "You have to have constant vigilance."

One drawback to using contractors Binegar has found is that he has less control over when work is done. He is considering creating an in house crew to fill in during those times when his contractors are busy with other clients. Many agencies may find a combination of in-house crews and contractors will help them keep production flowing, he said.

## Tips for working with contractors

**Define your standards:** know what you want a contractor to be able to do for your program.

**Start small if needed:** choose one area of your program to begin contracting.

**Research the company before hiring:** check references, credit and experience levels.

**Follow rules:** remember your contractors agreement must be approved by the State.

**Communicate clear expectations:** make sure they understand government regulations.

**Send them to training:** require them to complete the same courses you would have an employee complete.

**Don't make promises:** you may not be able to guarantee the amount of work you give them.

**Be flexible:** communicate whenever you can.

**Be vigilant:** use internal quality control.

**Pay on time:** contractors don't like working for slow payers.

Both directors noted that using contractors removes a number of personnel issues from their shoulders: overtime, drug testing, workers compensation, insurance, etc. "I'm a firm believer in using contractors in some way,"

Binegar said. "It will make your life easier."

Parker agreed.

"The end result is you're turning out a quality product and you've got someone there helping you meet your numbers," he said.

# Bakery ...

*Continued from page 3*

the more typical 1,400 his department did last year. Florence has also purchased three vehicles and ordered 10 more bringing his fleet to 25. Other items purchased include five blower doors, five insulation machines, six generators and four infrared cameras.

Another nearby property was purchased some time ago with the intent to build a warehouse, he said. That will now be used for additional parking.

The former store space in the building is already in use. The Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD) recently expanded its Ohio Weatherization Training Center to include four hub sites around the state. One site is in Dayton.

COAD is using the store space in the bakery building to conduct classes for new weatherization workers as it pushes to keep up with the increased demand for training generated by ARRA-related job creation.

Workers come from around the state to the

hub site. The training includes three days of classroom work and two days in the field working on an actual client's home. Other hub sites are located in Newark, Fremont and Akron under similar arrangements.

Florence has received several suggestions for uses for the space not already dedicated to weatherization, but no decisions have been made. For now, the actual bakery floor area will remain as it is: cluttered with old equipment and debris, including asbestos.

Any plan for that space will need careful thought, he said. Bids just for cleaning and painting have been much higher than he expected.

Various work on the building must be accomplished with different funds, however. ARRA cannot be used. Florence has already used corporate dollars – the same pot of money he used for the purchase – to put on a new roof. HWAP will however be allowed to pay rent to the CAP Dayton corporate fund using ARRA money.



**At left, the bakery floor in the former Interstate Bakery facility on Ludlow Street in Dayton. Wonder Bread was once baked in this space. Below, COAD trainer Seamus Galligan conducts a basic weatherization class in the former Wonder Bread outlet store space in the building. The 79,000-square-foot bakery has provided CAP Dayton with plenty of room for its weatherization department.**



# Agency leveraged...

*Continued from page 2*

“This part of downtown Bellefontaine will be totally transformed,” she said. “We anticipate more than 55 jobs will be created or saved in the rehabilitation project. We’ll have a building that’s free to us which reduces our transportation’s overhead costs for the next 20 years. A blighted property will be transformed into an asset to the local community.”

The ODOT grant, however, means all non-transportation functions will be relocating and that Tri-County once again headed off a vacant building. In late August, Tri-County will move administration and other programs to a 9,000-square-foot building at the corner of Patterson and Mad River roads in downtown Bellefontaine, averting another vacant building.

Birt is also capitalizing on the momentum generated by the stimulated HWAP program. She anticipates increasing numbers of clients for Vectren’s TEEM program. That program allows residents who do not meet federal poverty guidelines for free weatherization to receive the same services for a fee. Tri-County will use the income generated from that program to make double payments on its new HWAP facility so that is it paid off within the next five years.

“By doubling up on payments for the next five years and paying off the mortgage, overhead costs are reduced long after the ARRA stimulus dollars are expended,” Birt said.

“The transit facility will also greatly impact our community by creating and saving jobs, reducing agency costs, and reducing energy costs, all of which will continue to provide benefits for many years. Truly the ARRA funds have generated a tremendous impact for the communities of Champaign, Logan and Shelby counties of Ohio.”

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