

# OACAA *briefing*

News from Ohio's Poverty Fighting Network • September 30, 2009

## Cincy program to train young workers

The Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency (CAA) will build homes and rebuild lives while funds from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act rebuild the American economy.

Using \$972,000 of direct funding to its Youth Services Department, Cincy CAA has created the YouthBuild Construction and Training Program. To be eligible for the program, Hamilton County residents must be unemployed high school drop outs.

"It's designed to help those who have already kind of veered off the path, to bring them back on the path," said Mason Gray, Community Relations Director for Cincy CAA. "If you're a high school drop out or had a brush with the law, it's a program for you."

YouthBuild allows participants to work toward their GEDs while serving the community by building affordable housing. Youths earn a national certification in construction to help them get construction jobs when the program ends.

The program also teaches positive attitudes and self-sufficiency. CAA provides supportive services, such as personal mentoring, job skills training, mental toughness training, referral services and childcare. More than 90 percent of program students are placed in jobs or post-secondary education upon graduation.

When they're finished with the program, they will also be able to point to a tangible achievement.

"Things that we do for Habitat For Humanity. Those types of things that we do with them, students can go back later on, point at it and say 'I did this'," said construction instructor Brian Barnes. "It's a pride point for them. They've done something for their neighborhood. They've done something for their community,"

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Hamilton County youths lined up to apply for the YouthBuild Construction and Training Program at the Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency's kickoff event September 19. The program, funded by a grant through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, will train 120 youths in construction and job-related skills. The program is specifically for high school dropouts.

## October Weatherization Month in Ohio

Ohio Governor Ted Strickland has recognized October as Weatherization Month in Ohio.

Home Weatherization Assistance Programs throughout the nation will mark October as Energy Awareness Month as well as National Weatherization Day, October 30, with a variety of celebrations and events.

This event celebrates the success of HWAP programs, including the 57 across Ohio. Forty-three of Ohio's programs are operated by Community Action Agencies. In Ohio, HWAP

programs have weatherized 326,000 homes since 1977 with an average reduction of 24.7 percent in the amount of energy used to heat a home.

"It is my vision to develop a comprehensive long-term approach to the stewardship of our state's natural resources," the Governor said.

Each year, October is designated as Energy Awareness Month. The Department of Energy uses the onset of winter to promote energy conservation, renewable energy, and new technology use in the energy

industry.

The Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies and the Office of Community Services of the Ohio Department of Development want to know how your agency is celebrating Weatherization Month and/or Weatherization Day. Email details of your events to OACAA Communications Director Sharon Naragon at [sharon@oacaa.org](mailto:sharon@oacaa.org) and OCS' Michael Higgins at [michael.higgins@development.ohio.gov](mailto:michael.higgins@development.ohio.gov).

The proclamation is posted at [www.oacaa.org](http://www.oacaa.org).

## Tri-County CLS office moves

Tri-County Community Action Commission of Champaign Logan and Shelby counties has relocated.

The agency's new address is 125 East Patterson Avenue, Bellefontaine, Ohio 43311.

Telephone and fax numbers are the same.

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

# Deer season also a season for donations

Many Community Action Agencies in Ohio's network provide food pantries for clients who need temporary assistance. Supplying protein rich meat to those clients presents a special and expensive challenge, however.

Carol Bretz, executive director of the Community Action Agency of Columbiana County (CAA) solved that problem three years ago by partnering with Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry (FHFH) and the Columbiana County Department of Job and Family Services (JFS).

Bretz said the program was a natural fit for the rural area.

"It's part of the ethic here," she said. "A lot of people really like to hunt and once you get one deer for your freezer there's not a lot of incentive to go out and get another."

FHFH provides the incentive. Hunters are typically permitted to harvest more deer than most want to keep for feeding their own families. Under the FHFH program, the hunter transports the harvested deer to a USDA-approved processing center where the processing of the meat is paid for by funds raised by the local FHFH chapter. Meat is then distributed to the local agencies.

Columbiana County has been particularly hard hit by the economic recession, reaching 15 percent unemployment this summer. Bretz said the erosion began in the 1970s with the closure of several steel plants in eastern

Ohio and western Pennsylvania. In 1970, 52.5 percent of the jobs in Columbiana County were in manufacturing. By 2006, that percentage had plummeted to 14. Since 2006, several of the remaining manufacturing jobs have been lost with the closure or reduction of workforce at Elgers and American Standard.

"Every time they close up it's laying more and more people off and in today's economy, we know those jobs aren't coming back," Bretz said.

Bretz hopes the county can attract new, high tech jobs by leveraging funds from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. Meanwhile, she continues to work with JFS and local hunters to keep people from going hungry.

The county is designated part of Zone 3 by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Hunters in that zone are permitted to harvest up to six deer in the 2009-2010 season, much more than most want to feed their own families. According to Bretz, the food pantries are benefiting from the deer population and the hunting and farming culture of the area.

"This county is 530 square miles and it's mostly rural and agricultural and the farmers don't want the deer there," she said. "So they are more than willing to have people come on their land to hunt."

For the 2007-08 hunting season, CAA received 40 donated deer, Bretz said. They received 90 donated deer in the 2008-

09 hunting season and processed it into a variety of common cuts including chops and roasts.

Between November 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009, Bretz's agency gave out 402 packages of venison while JFS gave out 420 packages. Together, the two agencies served nearly 1,000 people. Each household received two to four pounds of venison, depending on household size.

Additionally, more than 700 packages of venison were distributed to other food pantries in the county.

"People are happy to get the venison," Bretz added. "It's organic. There are no hormones. It really helps. We don't spend a lot of money on meat anymore."

Deer hunting season in Ohio began September 26 with archers permitted to hunt until February 7, 2010. Early muzzleloader hunting is permitted in certain areas from October 19 to 24.

Youth gun season takes place on Nov 21 and 22. Gun season is from Nov. 30 to Dec. 6 and again from Dec. 19 to 20. Muzzleloader season will be from January 9 to 12.

For hunting regulations, visit the ODNR at [www.odnr.com](http://www.odnr.com). For information on participating in or starting an FHFH chapter in your area, visit [www.fhfh.org](http://www.fhfh.org). For information on receiving venison in Columbiana County, contact CAA at 330-424-7221. To donate a deer in Columbiana County, call 330-424-7767 24 hours a day.

## CAP-Dayton: Anatomy of a positive news story

*Editor's Note: The stimulus package has brought an unprecedented level of attention to Home Weatherization Assistance Programs. Media coverage of the programs and their positive results has varied across the state. Community Action Partnership of the Greater Dayton Area was the subject of a positive story on weatherization in the Dayton Daily News.*

*Here is Director of Communications and Public Relations John Bennett's account of the how the story came about. Among the keys to strong coverage are relationships—with reporters, staff and clients—and responsive teamwork.*

*View the article at: <http://www.daytondailynews.com/news/dayton-news/agency-helps-residents-fight-winter-energy-bills-272575.html>*

**Contributed by John Bennett**

A Dayton Daily News (DDN) reporter called me with the idea of doing a story on

the home inspection. A good idea, because there had been plenty of print and TV stories about the work that is done at the home, but nothing on the preliminary work.

We were fortunate that we had a few days to set up, and that we had a range of days that DDN could come out and do the story. Energy Coordinator Gene Bourne and I talked and I explained what kind of story DDN was doing and what they might need from us. We have crews out every day and they know what work is coming up, so when Gene came back with a picture of the home they were doing I called and set up the day and time with the reporter.

Our appointment was at 9:30, but we all arrived a little early. Gene and Inspector Kirk Scarce were able to get their equipment set up and I came early to meet the homeowner and tell her what was going on. Fortunately, she was very receptive to being part of the story, as most of our customers are.

When the reporter and photographer

arrived, everything was ready to go. They talked to our crew and the customers for a little bit, and then the inspectors began their work. There were many good photo opportunities due to the type of equipment we use and how the inspector has to poke around in the basement, attic, crawl space, etc. Gene and Kirk did a great job of explaining what they do. They have to explain it to the customers, so they can explain it to others. I just hang around in case we get into a negative line of questioning or if I have to find out some additional information.

I brought along a media kit with our annual report and handouts and the weatherization brochure.

We ended the day by giving the reporter our contact info. He called Gene and me for follow-up. He wrote the story on Friday and said it would be in over the weekend. Fortunately, they held it until Sunday.

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# Stimulus funding variety of programs around state

Community Action Agencies around the state are using stimulus funds to help maintain and create self-sufficiency in communities facing unprecedented need. Community Service Block Grant funds in the agencies were increased thanks to the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act allowing agencies to be more creative in their approach to serving people in need.

At **Kno-Ho-Co Ashland Community Action Organization**, mortgage and tuition assistance are helping people who never expected to be less than self-sufficient.

“We geared these programs toward people who have lost their jobs due to the economic downturn,” said Pam Wright, Community Services Administrator.

According to Wright, many people have already applied for mortgage assistance. They can receive either a one-time payment of \$1,000 or payments for up to three months that total no more than \$1,000. Additionally, the homeowner’s lender must agree to stop foreclosure proceedings for at least 30 days.

“If they get their mortgage up to date, they’ll be in a better position to renegotiate their loan,” Wright said. “We’re excited the banks are cooperating too.”

Wright said Kno-Ho-Co staff working on the both programs are also making sure clients take advantage of all the free services available. For tuition assistance, that also includes help with FAFSA forms for financial aid.

“We are helping a lot of people stay in their homes or get some training to get a better job,” Wright added.

The tuition assistance program provides up to \$2,500 for college, trade school or adult education class fees. To qualify, clients must have been laid off after Jan. 1, 2008 and still unemployed or underemployed (making significantly less in a new position).

“Many workers were employed with businesses and companies they’d hope to retire from someday,” Wright said. “However, due to the downturn in the economy many of them have been permanently laid off with jobs not available to fit their current skills.”

Classes can be attended almost anywhere, however, Wright noted the agency is developing partnerships with area colleges and schools such as Central Ohio Technical College. Applicants must live in Knox, Holmes, Coshocton or Ashland counties.

In Greene County, the **Community**



**Kurt Pilkington serves guests at the Hope Cafe open house on Sept. 18 in Greene County. The Hope Cafe is providing training in food service jobs to residents from local transitional housing and shelter programs. The program is one of many around that state funded by the stimulus.**

**Action Partnership of the Greater Dayton Area** has opened the Hope Café to train residents from local transitional housing and shelter programs for jobs in the food service industry.

The program apprentices are trained at the Community Action Partnership test kitchen in Xenia, Ohio. Greene County Director Gale Hutchinson said 12 people will go through the program over the next year.

Along with basic job skills, the curriculum includes training in proper interviewing skills, how to dress for employment, interpersonal skills and customer relations. The Hope Café will provide trained, capable workers who can assume full-time jobs in the community.

“They’re just blossoming,” Hutchinson said of her first four workers. “It’s just so great to watch them grow.”

An open house September 18 invited partner agencies, elected officials, agency employees and the public to sample a tasty array of sandwiches, salads, soups and desserts. The Hope Café has begun taking small catering jobs in the area and expects to grow the service as the apprentices continue and complete their training

Boxed lunches featuring a variety of sandwiches, wraps, soups, salads and

desserts are available for less than \$5 each. Larger quantities will be delivered. To order or to hire Hope Cafe to cater your event, call 937-673-0934 or email [hopecafe@cap-dayton.org](mailto:hopecafe@cap-dayton.org).

Residents of Lorain County will have new learning opportunities thanks to stimulus funding. The Community Learning and Technology Center is now open at the **Lorain County Community Action Agency (LCCAA)** offering a series of classes in everything from credit management to preparing nutritious meals for children.

“None of this would have happened without the hiring of a community learning coordinator and the concentrated effort made possible by the stimulus, said Jackie Boehnlein, director of strategic and organizational development for LCCAA. “This is a direct response to our community needs assessment. Our residents are looking for all sorts of self help opportunities. They want to learn.”

The center is an outgrowth of the agency’s GED program and currently includes limited computer lab facilities. According to Boehnlein, however, the agency will be updating the technology so

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# Can we count on you? Census 2010 gearing up

Non-profit organizations throughout Ohio are banding together to make sure everyone is counted in the 2010 census.

The Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) is leading an effort to ensure that hard to count Ohioans respond to the 2010 U.S. Census next spring.

The Census is mandated to occur every ten years by the U.S. Constitution. Its results determine the federal funding formula for programs such as the Community Services Block Grant (Community Action's primary funding stream) and representation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Coalition members have estimated that every person not counted could cost Ohio \$12,000 over the 10-year cycle



Locally, census results can determine where mass transit routes are placed, how many doses of vaccines for diseases such as the swine flu are available, and even access to key programs such as Home Energy Assistance (HEAP).

"Our challenge is to make the census meaningful to people who may not be aware of its significance," said a coalition spokesperson.

Non-profits, including Community Action Agencies, are uniquely positioned to accomplish this goal because they have established relationships with their community members.

To get involved, visit [www.youcancountonmeohio.org](http://www.youcancountonmeohio.org) where printed

materials are available for download.

The simple, 10-question census forms will be mailed in March and are due back April 1, 2010, also known as Census Day.

## YouthBuild ...

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To be eligible for the program, youth must be between the ages of 16-24, live in Hamilton County, be unemployed, and have dropped out of high school. The program includes two years of classroom instruction and job site work. During the third year, Cincy CAA will conduct follow up meetings with the students to "make sure they stay on the right path," Gray said.

There are 120 slots available and participants receive a \$400 stipend. On site interviews were conducted at the agency's kick off event September 19. However, applications are still available. Contact CAA's Youth Services at 513-569-1840 ext. 1466 or visit [www.cincy-caa.org](http://www.cincy-caa.org).

CAA's YouthBuild Construction and Training Program is made possible by YouthBuild grant funding received through the American Recovery and Reinvestment

Act. The Kickoff Event was co-sponsored by YouthBuild USA, the City of Cincinnati, Connect2Success, Cincinnati State Technical & Community College, Corinthian Baptist Church, Greater Cincinnati Microenterprise Initiative, Habitat for Humanity, Hamilton County Juvenile Courts and WIA.

## Positive news story ...

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Our marketing efforts have raised the awareness of our agency. Our friends in Washington and Columbus have helped publicize weatherization and HEAP in particular. Anything having to do with the stimulus is news.

This reporter has also written stories over the last year on Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, the Micro-Enterprise Business

Development and Training Programs, and on poverty in general.

What I try to do is to respond as quickly as possible when the media calls. If they know you can help them out on their short deadlines, then they're more likely to call you.

Our directors put up with an occasional short-notice interview request from me in exchange for them not having

to make and take calls from the media. I try to find out from the reporter the type of story to determine whether I can be the spokesperson or if it should be someone more directly involved in the program.

As you can see, it takes the help of many people to get a good media placement. When we get a story, I always notify the folks involved and thank those who helped get it done.

## Roundup ...

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the room resembles a college classroom or a professional office environment. The facility will also be available to the community to rent.

For details on class offerings or to register, visit [www.lccaa.net](http://www.lccaa.net).

**Community Action Organization of Delaware, Madison and Union** counties is using stimulus money to fund emergency assistance for people who have been able

to maintain employment but still struggle.

The Community Action Relieves Emergencies (CARE) program is for people who have an income and can pay their regular bills, said Marian Jacques, Services Director. CARE is designed for emergencies that jeopardize maintaining that income. For example, clients can receive up to \$500 one-time assistance for car repairs so they can drive to their jobs. Jacques said the agency will also help with

temporary transportation if needed.

One time \$500 assistance for rent or utilities is also available as is prescription assistance of up to \$150 one time or \$50 a month for three months.

"We will also be looking at other emergency situations on a case by case basis," Jacques said. "The needs are so great at this time because of the economy and we are trying to help people stay on their feet."

**Send OACAA your stimulus success story! Email [sharon@oacaa.org](mailto:sharon@oacaa.org).**