

Connections

Ohio Heartland Community Action Commission (OHCAC)
December 2011

From the Desk of Our Executive Director
Andrew J. Devany



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Well, 2011 has been an interesting and I would say successful year for OHCAC. We have initiated some new programs, Backpack and Fatherhood, and we will be saying goodbye to one of our oldest programs, RSVP. We have had considerable changes in our organization with new leadership in Head Start, the Morrow County Center and our Fiscal Department. We have continued to succeed with the ARRA or Stimulus funding, providing expanded services in Weatherization and Head Start, as well as added employment. We have spent our first year in our new facility in Galion and we have enjoyed the benefits of our new windows in our Head Start facility in Richland County.

We know that changes are coming in 2012. At some point, we will have a thorough Head Start Review under their new format. We anticipate significant cuts in our weatherization program and more reliance on our utility weatherization programming to continue operations. We look forward to the implementation of the Fatherhood Program and our collaboration with Head Start and WSOS Community Action Agency. There are a lot of unknowns out there in the upcoming year. Funding is always a challenge and the economy of our service area continues to struggle.

OHCAC has been fortunate for many years to have been blessed with a cadre of hard working and dedicated staff for virtually all of our programming. You all have demonstrated time and time again that you are willing to go the extra mile for the families and customers we serve.

I recently had the opportunity to join with some of my fellow Community Action Directors from Congressional District 4 and meet with our Congressman, Jim Jordan. We all had the opportunity to briefly summarize the services that our agencies provided to our clients. In compiling the data, it was a surprise to all of us how many people we serve in so many different ways through community action programming in District 4. The combined figures indicated that over 175,000 clients in the District received one or more services through a community action agency. In Community Action, you are part of a large network of people helping people to improve their situations. As a stranger said to me a number of years ago when I told him what I did for a living: "Oh, you do God's work". Yes, you do!



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Head Start

**Learn as much
as you can
while you are
young, since
life becomes
much too busy
later.**

**~Dana Stewart
Scott**

The most exciting news for the quarter is that some of our centers have received 2 stars in the Step Up To Quality rating system through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and several other are in a waiting pattern to determine designation. The centers that have received 2 stars are: Grace Street Centers 1-9, Galion Centers 1&2, the Clearfork Center, the Marie English Centers 1-6, the Cardington Center and the Whetstone center 1 & 2. We are still waiting to hear about the Marian Clark Centers 1 – 3; the center has had their visit, but the designation has not been decided upon at this point. The Shelby and Bucyrus centers are still waiting for their site inspection. There will be pictures taken for the paper when the banner for Step Up to Quality is presented to the centers.

Our staff and our community partners have been completing hearing and vision screening on our children and to date have completed 878 hearing screenings and 884 vision screenings. We have 802 complete dentals exams out of 917 children enrolled. We have three weeks left to complete the remaining 115 dental exams by the 90 day requirement. We now have 848 children that have complete immunization records with all the recommended immunizations completed. The intervention department has been working on referring children to local school districts after a review of the cognitive screening tool; currently there are 40 referrals to submit. We are currently serving 155 children with an IEP in our Head Start centers out of the 917 enrolled, so our disability enrollment is 16% of our total enrollment. We are required by the Head Start Performance Standards to enroll a minimum of 91 children in our program with an IEP or 10% of our funded enrollment. Our agency excels in this area as some Head Start programs must request waivers because they are unable to meet that requirement.

The Cardington Head Start center has a new playground surface and it looks awesome. The basketball hoop was reduced in size so that the children can throw balls into the chute easier. We will be ordering some additional items to enhance the playground. Due to the size and shape of the playground, we are unable to install climbing equipment because the fall space required by ODJFS is now 9 feet in every direction from the equipment.

We are currently at full enrollment in all of our Head Start centers and we have a waiting list of 348 children. Our average daily attendance is currently 89%, which means on average the children are attending 89% of the time. Our goal is to always maintain a minimum of 85% for our average daily attendance. We have been putting children and families on attendance plans if the team determines that there is a problem with a child not being present.



Debbie Schuster
Ohio Heartland Community Action Commission Head Start Director

Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP)

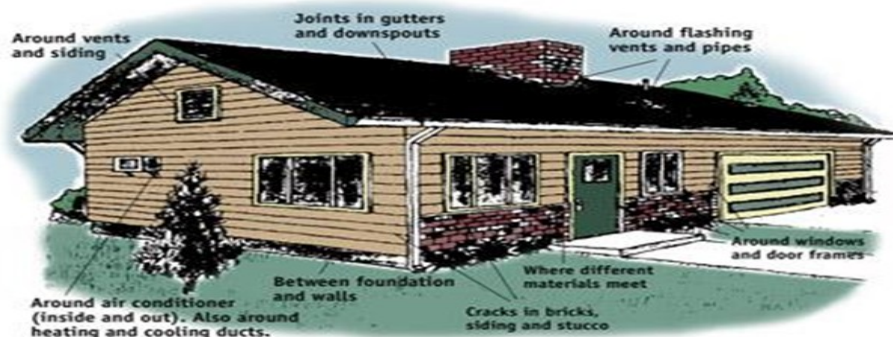
Using ARRA funding, the Home Weatherization Program has weatherized 569 households as of October 2011. The Electric Partnership Program (EPP) has performed over 250 audits. The Community Connection Program, which is funded through a contract with Ohio Edison through the Ohio Partners for Affordable Energy, has completed over 150 units. EPP and Community Connections have significantly reduced household electric bills in our service area. Thanks to the insight of our Executive Director Andrew Devany, Dave Rinebolt, Executive Director and Counsel of the Ohio Partners for Affordable Energy and other OPAE Board members, who were supportive in initiating these programs and similar programs throughout the state, thousands of Ohioans are benefiting from reduced home energy costs. All of us at OHCAC are thankful for their efforts.

Housing Director John Wildman

Here are a couple tips to get ready for the winter season.

WEATHERPROOFING BASICS

- In all the discussion of insulation and R-values, don't forget that poor weatherproofing is often a more important source of discomfort, as well as high heating and cooling bills.
- Some air leakage can be prevented during construction by using house-wrap or getting a tight fit between framing members, for example. Once the house is built, however, the remaining gaps must be sealed. Gaps around doors and window sashes should be weather-stripped, and gaps between permanent building materials sealed with caulking.



Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Crawford, Marion & Morrow Counties

RSVP has been a part of our communities since 1974. Over the past 37 years, Ohio Heartland Community Action Commission has supported and sponsored this volunteer program. Effective December 31, 2011, OHCAC is relinquishing the operation of RSVP. It was a difficult decision for OHCAC, but in light of the recent federal and state budgetary cuts, it was not financially feasible to continue its operation and maintain the quality and integrity of the program.

RSVP volunteers will continue to serve our communities along with thousands of other volunteers who provide services to meet the ever growing critical needs in Ohio and throughout the nation. RSVP was an advocate for seniors and a tremendous resource for agencies, organizations and potential volunteers. It recognized the vital work volunteers do each and every day.

My thanks to OHCAC and all the staff who supported RSVP throughout the past 37 years. Volunteerism is not going away. The void of losing RSVP can help to be filled if we all recognize the value in volunteering and either volunteer ourselves or encourage others to volunteer.

LEAD WITH EXPERIENCE!!

Bonnie Howard, RSVP Director

Morrow County



The Morrow County Neighborhood Center is busy with 2012 Winter Crisis Program customers and re-verifying PIPP Plus. The office continues to see families who are either late or are facing foreclosure on their mortgages through the Emergency Monthly Housing Program (EmHp). This program utilizes a portion of the Morrow County C.H.I.P. grant through the Morrow County Economic Development Office. The families must be no more than 3 months behind and have a mortgage payment no higher than \$1,750 per month. We have successfully assisted 10 families to date and anticipate providing assistance to a minimum of 10 more with this program. If you know of a family in need of mortgage assistance, ask them to call the Morrow County Office at 419-946-2009 ext 400 for a phone interview. We will send them a packet of information explaining what is needed for their appointment. The Food Pantry continues to assist an average of 250+ families a month with three days worth of food. We also continue to receive weekly donations from Pilot/Arby's. Morrow County Pizza Hut is now donating their overages of frozen pizza and other food to the Food Pantry every Monday. The Morrow County Neighborhood Center continues to be a referral agency for many services needed throughout the county.

Bob Foreman
HEAP Coordinator/Morrow County Center Director

Emergency HEAP

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) ended the 2011 Summer Crisis Program (2011SCP) August 31, 2011. The three counties of Crawford, Marion and Morrow assisted 788 households. The 2011SCP distributed 500 fans and expended over \$81,000 for utility expenses. This summer crisis program was somewhat different than in years past. This is due to the new PIPP Plus and that doctors are being more cautious when signing medical releases for customers to receive benefits if they are under the age of 60. All of the staff did a great job assisting our customers and navigating through all the many new changes with PIPP Plus.

The 2012 Winter Crisis Program (2012WCP) began on November 1, 2011 and will run through March 31, 2012. The first week went very well with staff assisting over 300 customers. A BIG thank you to all staff for doing such a fantastic job! The HEAP department also started a CFL light bulb fund for First Energy customers, who if eligible, can receive 6 light bulbs. OHCAC received over 17,000 bulbs and we hope to get all the bulbs distributed by the end of this winter heating season.

If you know someone who is in need of the 2012 Winter Crisis Program, ask them to call the **appointment hotline at 1-866-861-6421** to schedule their HEAP appointment. A customer needs to be at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. For more detailed information and to learn what documents are required for the face to face interview, call the appointment hotline or visit our website at ohcac.org.

~Bob Foreman, HEAP Director

**It takes as
much energy to
wish as it does
to plan.**

**~Eleanor
Roosevelt**

Marian Clark Community Action Center

The Marian Clark Center has welcomed Ryan Kessell as an intake worker. You may recognize his name as he was our CHORE worker. We are pleased to have him on a more regular basis. Marian Clark Center welcomed Cassandra Myers as an intake worker as well. With the addition of these two staff members, the Winter Crisis Program started off smoothly..

Our receptionist, Heather Thompson, welcomed TWIN identical boys Kameron Joseph and Cory Matthew on Columbus Day. Everyone is doing well and Heather is due back to work on December 1st, if she can pull herself away. Thank you Laura Ustaszewski for jumping in with both feet and helping us out.

We have ordered shelf stable meals for the Senior clients who receive home delivery lunch meals. As winter approaches, these meals are given to the homebound seniors so that they may have a meal on hand in the event we are unable to deliver due to unsafe travel conditions. It is a delicate balance between driver safety and senior nutrition.

Tracey Rector, Marian Clark Center Director

Egner Center in Crawford County

It has been a busy fall at the Crawford Center! Not only are we assisting our guests with their energy challenges, 250 families are utilizing our food pantry each month.

We were fortunate to have hosted 3 free produce markets recently. With the help of nearly 100 community volunteers, we distributed 30,000 pounds of produce donated by The Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio to over 500 Crawford County families. In addition, guests received simple recipes to make using the produce they received.

Because our pilot backpack program was so successful this summer, we have extended it into the 2011-12 school year. With the generosity of The Salvation Army, each Friday we provide 100 children with a backpack filled with enough kid-friendly food to last them through the weekend. They return the backpacks each Monday to be replenished for the next weekend.

The local Boy Scouts collected close to 9,000 items for our pantry during their annual November food drive. With the help of Galion Key Club members all food was sorted and shelves stocked in record time!

There is no slowing down with the holidays upon us! We have interviewed over 100 families needing Christmas assistance and have distributed 40 donated turkeys to families needing help with their Thanksgiving dinners. We are scheduling volunteers to ring the Salvation Army bells and soon will distribute buckets for the Million Pennies campaign.

Happy Holidays from the Staff of the Crawford Center!

FATHERHOOD PROGRAM

Ohio Heartland Community Action Commission has received a Fatherhood Grant through WSOS, a neighboring Community Action Agency. The objective of the grant is to assist fathers or male father figures gain employment or assist those fathers who are employed gain new skills to improve their employment.

Bonnie Howard is the Fatherhood Program Director. Notice of the funding award was received in October and awarded November 21, 2011. To help identify potential referrals for this program, we are partnering with the Head Start program, where referrals will be made by Head Start Advocates from all four counties. Application and assessment, enrollment, classroom instruction, technical/certificate training and on-the-job-training will follow based on eligibility, interest and need.

The program goals are many, but will focus on employment outcomes, with emphasis on economic stability, healthy marriages and responsible parenting.

Referrals are not limited to those from Head Start and are being accepted now. Contact Bonnie Howard, Fatherhood Program Director at 740-387-1039, extension 119 for more information.

Bonnie Howard, Fatherhood Program Director

OHCAC Highlight

Debbie has been employed by Ohio Heartland Community Action Commission since September 1997. She is best known for her Olympic times while doing flights of stairs, but there is much more to Debbie than that.

Debbie became OHCAC's new Head Start Director July 1, 2011. This position oversees 196 employees spanning four counties and a budget of over 6 million. Prior to accepting the Head Start Director position, Debbie was the Child Health and Education Director for 12 years. Other positions held with OHCAC include Lead Teacher and Education Manager. Before coming to work at OHCAC, Debbie was the Director of a for-profit Child Care Center in Findlay.



Originally from Pennsylvania, Debbie received her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Debbie has lived in Marion since 1997. Her family includes Dave, her husband of 15 years, daughter Katie and son Chris. A self-proclaimed nature freak, Debbie enjoys waterskiing, bird watching and camping.

Debbie's management style is positive and team oriented. She is visible to all her staff and can be seen attending their meetings and training sessions. Debbie says that she is "learning a lot" as Head Start Director. Those of us who work with Debbie can add that she applies what she's learned and does it well!

Services Offered by OHCAC

- Head Start
- Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
- Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
- Clothing Outlet in Crawford County
- Food Pantry (Galion, Morrow)
- Mortgage Assistance Program
- Senior CHORE Program (Marion)
- Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)
- Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP)
- WARM CHOICE Program
- Community Connections Program
- Electric Partnership Program (EPP)
- Senior Nutrition Program Meals (Marion)
- United Community Rx Program (Marion)
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program (ESFP)
- Fatherhood Program