



CONNECTIONS
Quarterly Newsletter
June 2023

From the Desk of Our Executive Director

As occurs with the onset of June each year, we are in the process of wrapping up two of our major programs: Head Start/Early Head Start and the Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP).

This year we are in a unique situation with Head Start. Like many of our peers all over the country, we have faced multiple teaching staff issues. There just do not seem to be enough pre-school education teachers available to meet the national need. This is a phenomenon that we at OHCAC have never seen before. There are a number of logical ideas that are being discussed which may have caused the national teacher shortage that is affecting OHCAC. These theories include: lower salaries for teachers, which has kept multiple potential teachers from seeking their degrees in Early Childhood Education; better pay and benefits available through school systems, which has led previous Head Start teachers to accept jobs with local school systems; the pandemic and its after affects; and institutions of higher learning not offering as many Early Childhood opportunities as they have in the past.

At OHCAC, we are optimistic despite the challenges with Head Start and Early Head Start staffing that we face. There is a great need for Head Start programming in our four-county service area. We continue to have significant waiting lists for children to enroll in both Head Start and Early Head Start. The need is more than apparent. At the present time we are at approximately 75% enrollment in our combined programs. This is not where we want to be. We have increased our number of classrooms over the past few months slowly but surely. We believe that this trend will continue and that our numbers will increase over the next few months. I appreciate the efforts of Head Start staff during this challenging period and I can assure everyone that we will continue to work to obtain full enrollment in OHCAC Head Start and Early Head start once again.

Our HWAP and weatherization programming has had a solid year. We are eagerly awaiting the increased funding that was awarded in the Inflation Reduction Act so that we can expand our program. This year we have also had a great deal of success with our partner Weatherization programming for EPP, where we have reached program goals in our contracted counties, and with Community Connections, where we have received increases in funding three times in the last nine months.

Our HEAP program saw a large number of customers this year, but our overall spending declined due to the availability of COVID funding to assist with utilities. As a result of still-existing balances in many customers' accounts, it is quite possible that this trend could continue into our next winter heating season. Our Summer Cooling Program (HEAP SCP) will be starting on July 1 and we anticipate a normal year where the program assists with electric bills, air conditioner repair, and the provision of air conditioners and fans on a scheduled basis on a three-year cycle as needed.

In addition to these continuing major programs, this past year OHCAC has had the opportunity to participate in the LIHWAP program assisting eligible households with water and sewer bill payment funding. This is a program that started slowly for us but picked up a great deal of momentum in the past few months. It is a pilot program that operates through September 30, 2023, and we are not sure at this time if it will be refunded. However, we are anxious to assist as many clients as we can prior to the September deadline.

Both the HEAP and LIHWAP programs are key programs offered through the continuing hard work, dedication and versatility of our center staff in Marion, Crawford and Morrow Counties.

**Executive Director
Andrew J. Devany**

www.ohcac.org

**Like us on
Facebook**

Inside this Issue:

Executive Director's Desk	Page 1
Services	Page 2
Agency Directors	Page 2
Head Start	Page 3
Board Members	Page 3
Energy Assistance	Page 4
Birthdays	4,6,7
LIWHAP	Page 5
Safety Committee	Page 5
Crawford County	Page 6
Morrow County	Page 6
HWAP	Page 7
Marion County	Page 8
Mission Statement	Page 8
Fiscal	Page 9
Benefits	Page 9
Celebrations	10 & 11



OHCAC Services Offered

**Tereasa and Jaime
Administration - Receptionists
740-387-1039 x-1100**

- Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
- AEP Neighbor to Neighbor Program
- Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)
- Food Pantry (Galion)
- Personal Needs Pantries (Marion and Morrow)
- Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP)
- WARM CHOICE Program
- Electric Partnership Program (EPP)
- Community Connections Program
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program (ESFP)
- Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)
- Rapid Rehousing and Homeless Prevention (Marion and Crawford)
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Prescription Assistance Program (Marion)
- Senior Commodity Boxes (Galion)
- Payee Program (Marion)
- LIHWAP Water Assistance
- Emergency Senior Funding Grant (Marion)
- Work boots (Crawford)
- Early Head Start and Head Start in Marion, Morrow, Crawford and Richland Counties
- Columbia Gas Fuel Funds
- First Energy Fuel Funds
- Resource and Referral
- Summer Reading Program (Marion)
- School Supplies (Crawford)
- Backpack Program (Crawford)
- Assist with SSI / SSDI applications

Agency Directors

Joe Devany
Executive Director
740-387-1039 Ext. 1118

Joseph Main
Deputy Director / Energy Coordinator
740-387-1039 Ext. 1121

Jim Lavelle
Chief Fiscal Officer
740-387-1039 Ext. 1117

David Wirick
IT Manager
740-387-1039 Ext. 1108

Debbie Schuster
Head Start Director
740-387-1039 Ext. 1109

Robert Foreman
HEAP/LIHWAP Director
Energy Programs
740-387-1039 Ext. 1111

Tracey Rector
Marion Co. Director
740-383-2154 Ext. 1313

Lisa Meddles
Morrow Co. Director
419-946-2009 Ext. 1908

Tammy Crabtree
Crawford Co. Director
419-468-5121 Ext. 1619



Head Start
Debbie Schuster, Director
740-387-1039 x-1109

Enrollment - 2023: Total Enrollment = 587 (475 HS + 112 EHS)

ENROLLMENT OVERVIEW						
Month	Enrollment		% Enrolled		# Under-Enrolled	
April 2023	94	345	83.9%	72.6%	18	130
	439		74.7		148	

Paula Langenderfer is retiring on June 30, 2023 after working for Ohio Heartland CAC Head Start for 31 years. She has worked as a Home Base Visitor, a Center Liaison, a Lead Teacher, an Education Manager, and she will retire as the Child Health & Education Director (CHED). She held the CHED position for 12 years and has assisted in opening classrooms, writing grants, maintaining collaborations, and supervising both teachers and managers.



She has completed extensive coursework in early childhood education, completing her Bachelor degree in Early Childhood Education. Paula plans to join her husband Scott in retirement and focus on camping at Lake Erie and spending time with her 3 children, their spouses and her 7 grandsons.

Our Head Start classes ended on May 18th and all of our Head Start Education staff are off for the summer — wishing them a wonderful rest. We will be installing new fence at the Haxton Center in Richland, preparing 2 new playgrounds at the Jan Hulse Center in Marion (one for EHS and one for Head Start), training managers on leadership skills, painting classrooms, waxing floors and hiring new staff. Melissa Conley will be the new Child Health & Education Director as Paula Langenderfer retires from the position.

Debbie Schuster,

OHCAC Head Start Director

BOARD MEMBERS

Marion County

- Paula Burnside
- Mark Davis
- Laura Detweiler
- Staci Thomas
- Sherry Russell
- Stephanie Hudson
- Robert Concepcion
- Jan Hulse

Crawford County

- Richard Genzman,
Board President
- Larry Schmidt
- Thomas O’Leary
- Joe Stafford
- Vacant
- Miranda Jones
- Rick Maddox

Morrow County

- Kelli Cooperider
- Tracy Blackburn
- Adam McCombs
- Darci Hendrickson
- Doyle Whited

Richland County

- Kim Meadows
- Fred Boll
- Vacant

Home Energy Assistance Program

Robert Foreman, Director
740-387-1039 x 1111



The following is an overview of the 2023 Winter Crisis Program (2023WCP) and other energy programs offered November 1, 2022 – April 15, 2023.

- ◆ Crawford County completed 573 households, Marion County completed 856 households and Morrow County completed 392 households for a combined total of 1,822 households served through the 2022-2023 Winter Crisis Program. Included in this total was a combined 52 furnace repairs.
- ◆ We expended \$608,773 in total benefits through the 2023WCP.
- ◆ In addition to the 2023WCP, staff completed 4,891 regular HEAP applications, which includes mailed-in and Queue (Online applications); and 4,446 PIPP + applications.
- ◆ We had 2 additional energy programs; 163 applications completed through the First Energy Fuel Funds, and 14 applications completed through the AEP Neighbor 2 Neighbor Fuel Funds.

The **2023 Summer Crisis Program (2023SCP)** will run from **July 1 – September 30, 2023.**



The 2023SCP will provide eligible households with a **one-time benefit** to assist with electric utility bills, possible central air conditioning repairs, possible air conditioning unit and/or fan purchases. Household income must be at or below 175% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

More finalized details about the 2023 coming soon. Call your local county CAC for more information around mid-June.

Call the automated appointment hotline at ***419-718-0047*** to make your 2023 SCP/HEAP/PIPP + appointments **or** go to **schedule online** at app.capappointments.com using Google Chrome.



BIRTHDAYS

July

Sommer Harris	2
Melissa Peters	2
Kelly Bautista	5
Rachelle Emory	8
Jamie Wilson	8
Angie Paul	10
Dennis Hardie	13
Ashley Gullett	13
Debi Herdman	14
Kaitlyn Crowl	14
Bryanna Lacey	16
Angela Neely	18
Patty Brown	18
Amy McClain	18
Emily Crissinger	21
Heather Thompson	23
Vickie Cerny	26
Marie Carns	26
Shannon Ayers	27
Natasha Snyder	30



**Low-Income Household Water Assistance
Program (LIHWAP)**
Robert Foreman, Director
740-387-1039 x 1111

The Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) is a federally funded program designed to help income-eligible families with their water and wastewater bills. *The program runs from October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023.*

Eligible families are those at or below 175% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG), who have been **disconnected (or have a disconnection notice), have a past due amount, going into lien, need to establish new service or pay to transfer service may be helped.**



Since the beginning of the grant, Ohio Heartland CAC has assisted over *1,003 plus* families and expended \$266,250 for drinking and wastewater needs.

If you are in need or know someone who is needing water assistance, please contact one of OHCAC's local Community Action Center's or 740-387-1039 and ask for the water assistance program in your county.

Water and Wastewater Benefits:

- Up to \$750 for a water bill.
- Up to \$750 for a wastewater bill.
- Up to \$1,500 for a combination Water/Wastewater bill.



Safety Committee Members
740-387-1039

Bev Kuenzli	Ext. 1104
Bob Foreman	Ext. 1111
Debbie Schuster	Ext. 1109
Paula Langenderfer	Ext. 1130
Tammy Crabtree	Ext. 1619
Tracey Rector	Ext. 1313
Lisa Meddles	Ext. 1908
Joseph Main	Ext. 1121

The safety committee meets quarterly to review accidents that have occurred, discuss if the accident could have been prevented, and what, if anything, needs to happen to prevent it from happening again.

The Exposure Control Plan is updated through this committee and we discuss sickness, flus and COVID issues.

We welcome safety concerns you see at your location. Big or small, we want to hear them all.

Safety is not just a Committee!!



Crawford "Egner" Center
Tammy Crabtree, Center Director
419-468-5121 x-1619

Our Food Pantry was the recipient of the food gathered from the Galion and Crestline Post Office Food Drive in May. We received over 2,700 pounds of food. Thank you to everyone who donated and helped with the Food Drive.



We will be offering the Back Pack Program during the Summer Feeding Program with the Galion City Schools. We provide each child who participates with a bag of food for the weekend. This program runs early-June through mid-July.

Our School Supply Program for Galion City School children will be offered again this year. We will start appointments in mid-July. Call 419-468-5121 ext. 1600 for more information.

Morrow Neighborhood Center

Lisa Meddles , Center Director
419-946-2009 x-1908

Morrow County staff spent the end of March through mid-April wrapping up applications from the Winter Crisis Program.

Now that winter has passed, we have been doing some spring cleaning and are very excited about springtime sunshine, flowers and warmer weather!

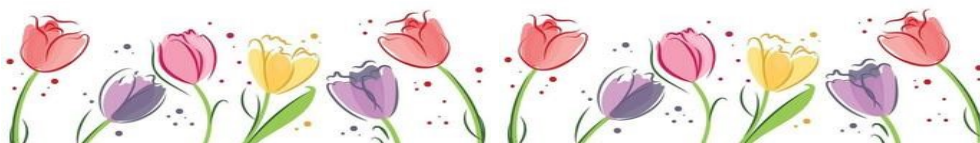
Morrow County's Personal Needs Pantry (hygiene and household items for men, women and children) is available on Wednesdays. We are very thankful for the generous monetary donation and pantry items donated by our neighbors at First Presbyterian Church!

Currently, several programs are available in Morrow County: HEAP, PIPP Plus, Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program, and COVID homeowner, rental and utility assistance.

BIRTHDAYS

August

Desiree Schlund	3
Stacie Stout	3
Sandra Pelfrey	7
Linda Hartle	7
Tracey Rector	8
Sara White	9
Peg Gwinner	11
Kim Barker	17
Patricia Rigby	17
Debra Varner	20
Kaitlyn Tanner	20
Bethany Dorsey	21
Kim Mahler	22
Jim Thurston	22
Nic Scheff	26
Katelynn Hemminger	31



Home Weatherization Assistance Program

Joseph Main
Deputy Director/Energy Coordinator
740-387-1039 x-1121

We are at the end of the Grant year for the Weatherization, EPP, and Community Connections programs. The goals set at the beginning of the program year for the Community Connections and EPP programs have been met. The HWAP program has met its goals as well - 5 weeks ahead of schedule. We look forward to transitioning into the new Grant year!

The Energy Office would like to remind everyone to stay cool.

Install a programmable thermostat. These nifty devices allow you to set automatic temperature controls for maximum comfort and energy efficiency alternatives to air conditioning during hot summer months. Keep temperatures higher when your family is not home to keep costs low.

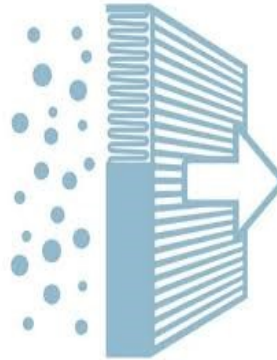
Replace your air filter. Your HVAC system's air filter gets a lot more use during the summer. Check it every thirty days throughout the summer; replace it whenever necessary.

Practice smart landscaping. Now is one of the best times to utilize those green thumbs. Strategically planting shrubs and leafy trees near your home's windows is an excellent way to prevent those same windows from transferring excess heat into your home.

Install exterior window coverings. If you aren't able to use nature to your advantage, another great way to protect windows is by adding awnings or screen shades to shade their exterior side.

Use smart door techniques. Mom had it right when she was yelling about letting all the cold air out. When the air conditioner is on and running, every opened door and window leaks out valuable energy. Keep unnecessary trips to and from the house at a minimum to keep your energy bill similarly low.

Clean your refrigerator coils. Refrigerators can cause surprisingly high energy usage, especially when they are not operating efficiently. To get the best performance from your unit, dust it off and clean up those condensing coils.



BIRTHDAYS

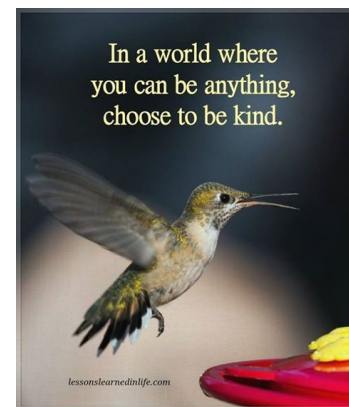
September

Pasheauna Smith	1
Tereasa Schrote	2
Mariah Drovdaahl	9
Sandra Stover	12
Jenny Myers	15
Watt Selmon	15
Rachel Elliott	16
Brian Henderson	17
Autumn Swartz	17
Maria Black	20
Brynna Williams	22
S. Phil Adams	24
Nicole Davis	28
Janelle Mendiola	28



Marian Clark Center
Tracey Rector, Center Director
740-383-2154 ext. 1313

If there is one thing I have learned in my lifetime, it is that we all need help at some time or another. As we move on from COVID, I remember speaking to many people for the first time needing assistance. They felt embarrassed and frustrated, but mostly lost. When you have not needed assistance before, it is hard to know where to start or what to even ask for. Our office staff try very hard to know what is available and where in our community you can receive the assistance you need. We try to put clients at ease when they are inquiring, either in person or on the phone. Our website even allows for you to make an inquiry to any of our counties. Through the customer service surveys that we collect and I review, I am reminded how important it is not to judge, to have a “been there, needed that” frame of mind, and to show empathy and compassion. Clients comment that the staff at Marian Clark Center are just that. “Kind”; “considerate”; “didn’t make me feel ashamed”; “exceeded my expectations”; and, “she really listened and I felt so much better after I left” are just a few of the comments received in our office last month.



Grants change. Programs come and go. Guidelines are updated. Kindness is felt and not forgotten.

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. - Aesop

OHCAC Mission Statement

The Ohio Heartland Community Action Commission (OHCAC) will foster and promote planning services and developmental efforts for the mobilization and utilization of resources, public and private, for coordinated attack upon conditions of poverty affecting the inhabitants of the area.

OHCAC will continuously support economic self-sufficiency. It will encourage the provisions of services, and other activities toward developing employment and economic opportunities, improving human performance, individual and group motivation, productivity, housing and bettering conditions under which people live, learn, and work.

OHCAC will solicit, contract for, receive, administer, and disburse any funds, grants, bequests, devises, and other resources for the execution and implementation of specific or general programs in carrying out its purposes.

Fiscal Factoids

Anita Major, Fiscal Office Manager
740-387-1039 x-1103

Please make sure you update your address and phone number in Kronos if you move or change your phone number. Also, make sure to follow the instructions in **Red** for each HR Action. We will need to ask you to redo your address or phone number change if the instructions are not followed.



Also, make sure to review your pay statements and contact me with any questions.

We have a new email address for Payroll questions and it is payroll@ohcac.org that you can email. This email will go to myself, Bev, and Amanda so that someone is available to answer your questions during all business hours.

You can always call me at extension 1103 with your questions, also.

Bits from Benefits

Bev Kuenzli, Benefits/Assist. Office Manager
740-387-1039 x-1104

Hi Everyone!

Get ready for the Annual Orientation on August 2, 2023! Just a reminder, please do not schedule any vacation or personal time off for that day.

New Hires and First Timers: this is an In-Service Day for all employees. You will be paid for the day. For the last 3 years we have had to have it on Zoom so we are excited to plan the in-person event.

I will be sending out more information in the next few days regarding lunch, time to arrive, location, etc.

Have you ever wondered what the *Top 5 Safety Tips for Summer* are? Here they are!

- Practice Summer Heat Safety. Never leave an infant or young child alone in a closed car in the summer.
- Stay Safe Around Water. Never let a child near water unattended.
- Protect Your Skin Against Sunburn.
- Keep the Bugs at Bay.
- Avoid Poison Ivy. Teach your family to beware of leaves of three!

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio mails kids one free book each month until their fifth birthday. Any child in Ohio between birth and age five years old can enroll in the program for free: OhioImaginationLibrary.org.

Early literacy skills are critical to a child's success. Caregivers cannot delay in exposing kids to reading because a child's brain is already 80% developed by age three. Please take advantage of this free resource that will help to prepare your little one to take on kindergarten—and life!



See you In August!

Benefits Bev

TEAM SHELLY

Jan Hulse Head Start Center showing their support for a team member battling cancer.

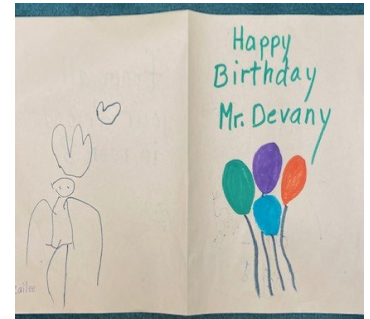


Mr. Devany and Board President
Richard Genzman

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Joe Devany,
Executive Director

Celebrating his birthday with
cards from a Head Start
classroom, cake at the Board
meeting, and some of the
Administrative staff invading
his office.





Heidi Jones, Chamber Foundation President,
with Joseph Main, OHCAC Deputy Director/
Energy Coordinator

LEADERSHIP MARION!

Congratulations Joseph Main!

Marion Area Chamber of Commerce
Leadership Development Program



Leadership Marion 2022-2023 Graduating Class

The Promise of Community Action

Community Action changes people's lives,
embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities,
and makes America a better place to live. We care
about the entire community, and we are dedicated to
helping people help themselves and each other.



Morrow County Neighborhood Center shows their support for
Community Action Month