



CONNECTIONS
Quarterly Newsletter
September 2023



**Executive Director
Andrew J. Devany**

From the Desk of Our Executive Director

Prior to our 2023 agency in-service/orientation in August, our rookie Administrative Receptionist, Tereasa, a very pleasant lady who has never had the opportunity to attend an OHCAC all agency orientation, asked me what I was going to say. I told her that, although I had been thinking about it, I did not know.

I got to thinking that we really hadn't had a normal All-Agency orientation since 2019, what with the pandemic and remote access, and I realized what I should say to all of you. I should say, *Thank You*. Because, in spite of the pandemic with all of the accompanying issues, challenges and complications, **You Made It Work**. So, with the following welcome and introduction given during this year's in-service/orientation, I will attempt to acknowledge what you have done and what you continue to do.

"Thank you to the administrative staff including: those in fiscal who have paid the bills, paid the staff, answered hundreds of questions, solved thousands of problems and continued to meet every deadline that was put before them by the funding sources, the staff, Jim ... and me.

Thank you to those who constantly dealt with normal and unusual personnel issues, including Bev, Debbie, Joseph, Peggy, Anita, Linda, Melissa, Paula and Trent.

Thank you to our IT Department – that's David, who covers multiple locations and problems in 4 counties on a daily basis and who has been on call 24/7, coming up with creative solutions for the past 3 years.

Thank you to our secretarial / clerical staff in all four counties in all programmatic areas for keeping their offices and their managers on schedule, meeting deadlines, and serving customers with a smile and a kind word.

Thank you to our managerial staff who have constantly gone the extra mile to serve customers, families and children while watching out for the safety and needs of their staff during these uncertain times.

Thank you to our Head Start Center staff who have continually been resourceful, careful and creative in finding ways to continue to serve children and families in the face of COVID and its accompanying shutdowns and quarantines.

Thank you to our weatherization and energy staff who have continued to go on site to the homes of customers, while taking the appropriate precautions to guarantee safety in the provision of essential energy saving services.

Thank you to our Community Action Center staff who have worked on site daily throughout the pandemic finding ways to assist clients by telephone, drop boxes and emails while dispensing millions of dollars to clients to insure payments of rents, utilities, and taxes.

Thank you to our Head Start staff who have gone the extra mile to ensure that in the early days of the pandemic our Head Start families had food reserves and diapers, even going the extra mile to home deliver these products.

Thank you to our funding sources who have made resources available to us to continue to provide services throughout the pandemic, and who have been willing to consider creative means to serve customers while ensuring safety of both staff and customers.

Thank you to our Board of Directors and Policy Council who have continued to support our efforts on all fronts to serve customers and maintain the safety of staff throughout the pandemic and its aftermath.

Thank you to our many vendors who have shown patience, trust, sympathy and professionalism, and by doing so made our jobs easier and doable.

Thank you to our customers throughout the agency who have patiently worked with our staff to ensure the provision of services to provide assistance to all throughout this long, frustrating pandemic ordeal.

And finally, **Thank You All** for staying with us on this seemingly never ending and ever-changing roller coaster ride of masks, vaccines, disinfectants, quarantines, shutdowns and serious illness while continuing to provide professional assistance to customers in need.

OHCAC Services Offered

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

**Our Website:
www.ohcac.org**

**Like us on
Facebook**

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

**BOARD
MEMBERS**

COUNTY	# HS OPEN	# HS PLACED	# EHS OPEN	# EHS PLACED	WAITLIST
MARION	130/150	121	40/48	40	HS = 10 EHS = 22
RICHLAND	90/215	90	24/32	24	HS = 39 EHS = 31
MORROW	20/20	19	16/16	15	HS = 2 EHS = 0
CRAWFORD – Galion	50/50	40			HS + 0
CRAWFORD –Bucyrus	40/40	40	16/16	16	HS = 2 EHS = 12
TOTAL	330/475	310	96/112	95	HS = 53 EHS = 65

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

Head Start classes began on August 14th and we are looking forward to a wonderful year serving the children and families. I appreciate all of the staff that have been working hard to prepare for the new year. We have received a letter from the Office of Head Start regarding under enrollment. We are required to develop a plan in collaboration with the Office of Head Start (OHS) to address our current under enrollment status. Based on the Head Start and Early Head Start enrollment levels reported by our agency, Ohio Heartland Community Action Commission, will be given 12 months to achieve at least 97 percent enrollment, as described in Section 641A(h) (5) of the Head Start Act. The 12-month period goes into effect 10 days following the date of the letter. During the 12-month period, OHS will partner with our agency to ensure that we have a plan. The 12-month period will conclude not later than August 10, 2024. We are currently 93.7% enrolled in Early Head Start. Currently, we have 6 Head Start classrooms not able to open due to staff vacancies including 6 Lead Teacher openings, 6 Associate Teacher openings and 4 floater positions. We have 2 Early Head Start classrooms currently not able to open due to staff vacancies including 3 Early Head Start Teachers and two floater positions. We are hiring! Please encourage friends and neighbors to apply.



Home Energy Assistance Program

Robert Foreman, Director
740-387-1039 x 1111

Agency Directors

“Happy Fall” from the Home Energy Assistance Program department!

The 2023 Summer Crisis Program (2023SCP) is finishing up. The program runs from July 1 through September 30. We have until October 15 to finish any pending/incomplete applications that were started during the 2023SCP season. No new applications can be started after September 30. If a client still needs to finish their pending/incomplete application, please call your local county CAC office.

In addition to the 2023SCP, staff are also busy with the AEP Neighbor to Neighbor fuel funds. These fuel funds started July 1 and are available through September 30.

The 2023-2024 Winter Crisis Program (2024WCP) is fast approaching. It will begin on November 1, 2023 and operate through March 31, 2024.

Our in-house training for staff to finalize all necessary 2023-2024 Winter Crisis Program guidelines will be October 26, 2023.

Please continue to utilize our website ...www.ohcac.org The HEAP department has a drop-down menu that has all the most updated information we have to date. Watch the website for more information about the opening of the automated appointment hotline to schedule a 2023-2024 Winter Crisis Program appointment.

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

Summer Crisis Program impact since it began July 1:

- 250 Fans have been distributed allowing households to be more comfortable.
- 215 Window air conditioners have been given to households who can now breathe better on these extremely hot days.
- 980 Households will receive a one time HEAP credit this winter to assist with higher energy bills.
- 70 Applications have been completed for PIPP. This allows households with low to moderate income better afford their utility bills.
- 620 Households received electric assistance with a disconnection, or starting new service.
- 18 Households were assisted with central air repair. These costly repairs are difficult for many households to complete.

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



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 LIHWAP program runs from October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023. Last day to apply is 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, pay to transfer service or have current charges may be helped.**

Since the beginning of the grant, over 1,300 families have been assisted with keeping their water on, getting it restored or transferred. With expending \$341,359 for drinking and wastewater with LIHWAP, households could maintain healthy habits and keep the waster water bill from going to the property tax bill.

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.

Water and Wastewater Benefits:

Up to \$750 for water bill

Up to \$750 for wastewater bill.

Up to \$1,500 for a combination
Water/Wastewater bill.



October Birthdays

Justine Chevailer	3
Karen Marshall	7
Amy Daly	9
Victoria McQuiston	9
Jason Lilly	11
Richard Murphy	12
Sidney Scheff	12
Sharonda Wilson	13
Sierrah Taska	16
Wendy Bennett	27
Anita Major	27
Rockie Jones Bigham	28



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



Thank you to Firelands Federal Credit Union for their generous donation of \$500 toward our School Supply Program. 65 children were assisted with the help of your generosity.

We have COVID-related rental assistance. Please call 419-468-5121 ext. 1617 for more information.

Cold weather is just around the corner. Please consider donating any gently used winter coats, winter boots, hats, and gloves. We are in need of infant to adult sizes.

Our Christmas Adoption Program will begin in late October. Call 419-468-5121 ext. 1600 for more information.

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

Summer has been busy! The Morrow County office had an exterior wash, the outdoor sign was replaced, and the ramp/entrance was repainted. Thank you maintenance team.

The Summer Crisis Program has been in full swing and we have been tracking similar to last year's program. Our Personal Needs Pantry continues to be steady.

In July and August, we had \$50 Kroger Food Cards again through the Emergency Food and Shelter Program and assisted 61 households!!! These cards are marked FOOD ONLY and can be received only 1 time per grant.

We have also continued assisting some renters and homeowners with rent and/or utility assistance through the COVID programs.

We welcome Angela Neely as Morrow County's newest HEAP Intake Worker! Angie has been with Ohio Heartland for a little over a year and was our Receptionist prior to this transfer. Congrats, Angie!

November Birthdays

Casey Weaver	3
Amy Huckaba	4
Kylie Brown	5
Amanda Siwek	9
Isabella Noakes	10
Reina Riegel	14
Sherita Catchings	16
Haley Gold	17
Rose Brough	18
Kirsten Braen	20
Laura Wixtead	25
Brenda Ramey	26
Sara Nemeth	29



Bits from Benefits

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

Hello All!

It was great seeing everyone at our Annual Orientation/In-service Day. We had a lot of fun and learned some things, too!

Hopefully, next year we can bring back Lt. Ed Brown from the Marion City Police Department to speak on some of the many subjects he offers.



MARION

Police Department

I will soon sending out information on the upcoming Open Enrollment. Please be patient, read the email, and complete the forms I ask you to complete. I know it can be confusing, but all the directions to complete the paperwork will be on the email, and will make it easy for you!

Fiscal Factoids

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

Kronos log on and name change: The links on our website and on your computer desktops should still work, but your user names and passwords have changed.

Thankfully, they have been changed to your existing email address as your username, along with your current email password to login to Windows.


What to expect when you log on:

When you click on your Kronos shortcuts, either on our webpage or on your desktops, you will be prompted to log into Microsoft Office.

Put in your full email address in the username box. Click Next.

Then, put your Windows/Email password into the password field. Click Next.

 Click on the Apps icon on the left side of the page.

Under the other APPS section you will see UKG Ready.  UKG Ready
Click on UKG Ready.

You have now been securely logged into Kronos. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation during this change.

December Birthdays

Christine Jones	1
Marilyn Brumensch	2
Michael White	2
Melissa Conely	5
Stephanie Waggoner	7
Chelsee Givens	8
Octavia Nuez	13
Alexis Bower	15
Lori Mc Cune	18
Kourtney Florida	20
Nedra Ernest	21
Camille Arndt	24
Jodi Lucas	24
Chantel Crawford	25
Megan Church	27
Jammie Taylor	27
Diane Howard	30
Eric Withrow	31



Home Weatherization Assistance Program

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



Safety Committee Members

Bev Kuenzli	Ext. 1104
Bob Foreman	Ext. 1201
Debbie Schuster	Ext. 1109
Melissa Conley	Ext. 1128
Tammy Crabtree	Ext. 1619
Tracey Rector	Ext. 1313
Joseph Main	Ext. 1121
Lisa Meddles	Ext.1908

With most of our programs starting a new grant year we are in full swing at the Energy Office. We have added Richland County to our HWAP, Community Connections, and Warm Choice programs this year. With the possibility of adding the BIL program later this year, it is going to be a very busy year for HWAP. Community Connections and HWAP have started strong this grant year, and we are still waiting for a contract for the EPP program. We look forward to all of the new challenges and to keeping the momentum rolling through the fall!

9 Ways to prepare your home for fall:

1. Clean, or possibly replace, your gutters.

If they're clogged, you can end up with a flooded interior and damaged exterior. Clean them, and if necessary, replace them.

2. Check for drafts.

Heat loss through windows is responsible for 25-30 percent of heating energy use, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Weather-stripping is a simple cost-effective way to keep heating costs down.

3. Drain your outdoor faucets.

Drain and disconnect all garden hoses from outside spigots to prevent any water freezing. Not doing this can result to pipes bursting.

4. Bring your outdoor furniture in.

If you don't have anywhere to store the items, you should cover it in a waterproof furniture cover.

5. Fix any cracks in your driveway.

Enough small cracks can turn into big cracks, and eventually the concrete can crumble.

6. Change your filters.

FYI: Disposable filters can be vacuumed one time before you replace it, and foam filters can just be vacuumed and not replaced.

7. Fertilize your lawn.

Applying fertilizer will prevent winter damage. Doing this will also help your lawn turn green faster in the spring.

8. Test winter equipment.

Check it all now and make your life easier later.

9. Change your batteries.

Once a year you should be checking to make sure all smoke detectors and carbon monoxide devices are working.

"Safety is something that happens between your ears, not something you hold in your hands."

Jeff Cooper.



Marian Clark Center

Tracey Rector, Center Director

740-383-2154 ext. 1313

The year is more than half over and I just don't know where the time goes. We are busy assisting those who need air conditioners and fans, central air repair and PIPP/HEAP applications. LIHWAP continues through the end of September. We continue to keep our fingers crossed that this program will continue as it has proven to be so beneficial to many.

Our impact over the last 3 months:

- **26** Senior have been assisted with emergency funding for unmet needs from Marion County Council on Aging
- **16** Households were assisted in the Homeless Crisis Response Program allowing us to put or keep a roof over their family after they have fallen on hard times.
- **32** Households were assisted with personal need items. This assistance helps families use their limited income on other bills such as electric, gasoline, food, etc.
- **9** Households were assisted with rent or utilities with the ARPA/COVID related loss of income grant. Being able to assist with utilities or rent gives some release of the stress of being sick and off work.
- **130** individuals received food cards from the Emergency Food and Shelter Program for assistance with food insecurities.

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.

OHCAC Longevity Awards



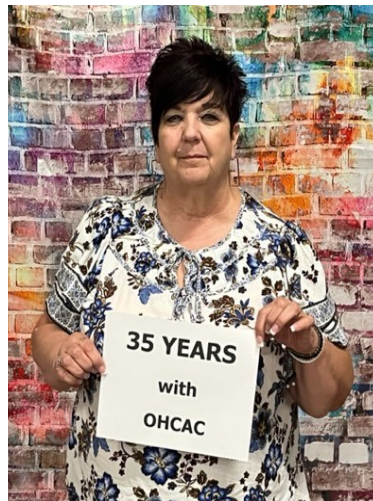
Eric Withrow with Head Start, and
Becky Brown with the Energy Office



Kathy Neff with Head Start



Sheila Nickum with Head Start



Kathi Edler with Head Start



Carl Jones with the Energy Office

Not pictured: Peg Gwinner with
Head Start

OHCAC Agency Orientation



David Wirick with IT and Anita Major with Fiscal informing us of some changes in our payroll system.



Trent Grooms, EEO Officer, brings us up to date on changes



Deputy Director/ Energy Coordinator Joseph Main reminds us how important our work is.



Joe Devany, Executive Director, gives us a State of the Agency Address. This year he also gave us a heartfelt thank you for all of our hard work.



Stephanie Petty and Doug Thorpe from the Schwendeman Agency ready and waiting to fill us in on the services available to OHCAC.



Carrie Cochran with Head Start sharing available resources that she has found.

Lt. Ed Brown, MPACT Coordinator, with the Marion Police Department, was able to join us for the afternoon. He brought videos and slides that made us think. MPACT stands for Marion Police and Community Together. Lt. Brown conducts drills with the schools for active shooter training, supervises the School Resource Officers (SRO's), and much, much more. As part of his duties, he speaks to agencies about how to be as safe as possible when (not if) a situation arises. We saw examples of what not to do and suggestions on what to do.



OHCAC Agency Orientation



Energy Office Staff



First floor Administration Office Staff

THE STATE OF THE AGENCY

We received a letter from our Head Start funding source at HHS regarding our under-enrollment, which is a result of our ongoing staffing challenges over the past 12 months. We will soon be meeting with Head Start Regional Office representatives to discuss our options for a long-range solution to this problem. We will keep you apprised of this situation as it continues to unfold.

Our CSBG Centers in Marion, Crawford and Morrow Counties continue to have COVID resources along with HEAP and CSBG funding available to provide services throughout the current program year. At this time, we do not believe that our programs are in jeopardy with the talk of a government shut down since our program year funding is on a different schedule than the federal fiscal year.

Our Energy programs are fully funded and, in many cases, increased for the upcoming program year. We are also the interim operator of the Home Weatherization Assistance Program in Richland County through June of 2024. If we are successful in this endeavor, we will apply to be the permanent provider of weatherization services in Richland County in the future. In conjunction with our weatherization work in Richland County, we will also be providing Columbia Gas Warm Choice, State of Ohio EPP, and First Energy Community Connections services in the area for the existing program year.



Each day all of the teaching staff, show up, wipe noses, change diapers, dry tears, and do it with a smile. This group of Early Head Start Teachers brings their building a little extra with shirts that show how much they love the children and working together as a staff. Days can be difficult, but working with the right people makes all the difference.