



**Executive Director
Andrew J. Devany**

CONNECTIONS
Quarterly Newsletter
December 2021

**From the Desk of Our
Executive Director**



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Inside this Issue:

I know that I do not need to tell anyone that this has been a challenging year for all of us. The issues in dealing with the pandemic continue to surround us and intertwine with every decision that we make. They also force us to make decisions that we never thought that we would be making. For example: which is more important to me - my personal belief that a quickly developed vaccine is not safe for me and my family, or my employer's mandate that I either get the vaccine or leave my job? What is the right decision for me? Should I take my chances that I won't contact COVID? I have somehow avoided it so far. Or, maybe I have had it, survived it, and built up the necessary antibodies to make me immune from catching it again. What about these new strains that seem to pop up every time we think that we are getting ahead of the curve on this thing? After all this time nobody really seems to know when, or if, it will ever end.

We are all tired of COVID and everything that goes with it. I hate the damn masks. They fog up my glasses and make me lose my hearing aids. Try wearing glasses, hearing aids and masks on your ears all day and see how many times you can avoid "hearing aid fall out," which is especially problematic when you have a lab puppy that spots the hearing aids on the carpet and devours them like they are a small plastic chew toy. But I digress.

Mine is a minor annoyance compared to the potential life-altering decisions that OHCAC staff are having to make. Such as, is it better to get the vaccine or not to get it? That is the decision that we all have to make at OHCAC. As the provider of the Head Start Program in Marion, Crawford, Richland and Morrow Counties, OHCAC is in the position that we have to require staff to be vaccinated. Our major funding source, the Office of Health and Human Services (HHS), has mandated that all Head Start staff be fully vaccinated by January 31, 2022. We have to follow that mandate. Since over 70% of our staff are paid either fully or partially from Head Start funding, this becomes the standard for all OHCAC staff.

I personally support the mandate and hope that everyone gets the vaccine. But, I freely admit that I do so for personal reasons. It is not just because I am a diabetic who is over 65. I have two family members who work in hospitals and come in contact with those who are not vaccinated on a daily basis. One of them is a lead COVID nurse in a major metropolitan hospital. She has lived with the horrors of COVID and its aftermath every day since March of 2020... for almost two years. Although through the grace of God and enumerable medical precautions she has not become infected, the daily struggle continues to take its toll on her.

I hope that everyone is able to make the choice that is right for them, and I hope that COVID will be just a horrible memory in the near future.

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OHCAC Services Offered

**Ann 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, 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)
- Clothing Outlet in Crawford County (also available to Marion and Morrow County residents)
- Prescription Assistance Program
- Senior Commodity Boxes (Galion)
- Payee Program (Marion)
- Water Assistance
- Emergency Senior Funding Grant (Marion)
- Work boots (Crawford)
- Gas to work assistance
- Early Head Start and Head Start in Marion, Morrow, Crawford and Richland Counties
- Columbia Gas Fuel Funds
- First Energy Fuel Funds
- Resource and Referral
- Assistance obtaining state identifications and birth certificates to gain employment.
- Medication Lock Boxes (Morrow)
- Summer Reading Program (Marion)
- School Supplies (Crawford)
- Backpack Program (Crawford)

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 Director
Energy Programs
740-387-9703 Ext. 1201

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

Sara Herrera
Morrow Co. Director
419-946-2009 Ext. 1905

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



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

BOARD MEMBERS

We were able to bid on the Marie English Early Childhood Center in November of 2021 and will hopefully take possession in April 2021! Acquisition of the building located at 2381 Harding Highway East in Marion will enable us to have a permanent location for 7 Head Start centers and 2 Early Head Start centers.

On Tuesday, November 30, 2021, the Head Start Program Performance Standards were revised to Incorporate Staff Vaccination and Universal Masking Requirements that state:

Regarding vaccines: all staff, and those contractors whose activities involve contact with or providing direct services to children and families, must be fully vaccinated for COVID-19, other than those employees:

1. For whom a vaccine is medically contraindicated;
2. For whom medical necessity requires a delay in vaccination; or
3. Who are legally entitled to an accommodation with regard to the COVID-19 vaccination requirements based on an applicable Federal law.

Those granted an accommodation must undergo SARS-COV-2 testing for current infection at least weekly with those who have negative test results to remain in the classroom or working directly with children. Those with positive test results must be immediately excluded from the facility, so they are away from children and staff until it is determined that they are no longer infectious.

Regarding Masking: Using masks recommended by CDC, for all individuals 2 years of age or older when there are two or more individuals on a vehicle owned, leased, or arranged by the Head Start program; indoors in a setting when Head Start services are provided; and for those not fully vaccinated, outdoors in crowded settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people, except:

1. Children or adults when they are either eating or drinking;
2. Children when they are napping;
3. When a person cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act; Or When a child's health care provider advises an alternative face covering to accommodate the child's special health care needs.

We have 178 staff in our current grant, 26 positions that are currently open and about 38 staff that have not received the vaccine. We have three classrooms closed at this time due to positive COVID-19 exposures to children and staff.

ENROLLMENT OVERVIEW			
Month	Enrollment	% Enrolled	# Under-Enrolled
August 2021	511	87%	76
September 2021	553	94.2%	35
October 2021	560	95.4%	27
November 2021	544 EHS 112/ HS 448	92.6%	43

There were 7 members of the management team who attended the Conscious Discipline Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The team learned how to support children with ASD by making meaningful-mindful connections, increasing social & emotional learning, understanding ASD brain development by presenting information differently, modify the classroom routines and its dynamics to allow for a school family culture to cultivate belonging, cooperation and skills that set the stage for lifelong success. The team is planning to train all EHS/HS staff in the area of ASD and to support the agency ongoing learning in our Conscious Discipline curriculum.

Marion County

- Kerr Murray
- Staci Thomas
- Danica Dodson
- Sherry Russell
- Stephanie Shaffer
- Robert Concepcion
- Laura Detweiler

Crawford County

- Richard Genzman,
Board President
- Larry Schmidt
- Thomas O'Leary
- Joe Stafford
- Tina Bloomfield
- Rick Maddox
- Douglas Court
- Darrin Harvey

Morrow County

- Kelli Cooperider
- Tracy Blackburn
- Kelsey Lewis
- Darci Hendrickson
- Doyle Whited

Richland County

- Theresa Alt
- Tamea Jobe
- Fred Boll

Home Energy Assistance Program

Robert Foreman, Director
740-387-1039 x 1201

The 2021 Summer Crisis Program (2021SCP) started July 1 and ran through September 30, and we had until October 15 to finish any pending/incomplete files. Staff assisted 950 households with the 2021SCP and completed 1,633 State HEAP and 1,294 PIPP Plus applications during the Summer Crisis Program months. In addition to the utility benefits, 337 air conditioners, 4 casement units and 349 fans were distributed. There were also 23 central air repairs done throughout our 3 counties. We doubled the number of applications and additional benefits this year due to the state opening the guidelines to assist more customers. Staff did an excellent job, as always, assisting our families with their utility needs for the summer crisis of 2021.

For the months of September and October, staff continued to assist families with their 2021SCP applications as well as State HEAP and PIPP Plus applications while preparing for the upcoming 2022 Winter Crisis Program (2022WCP). It was a busy late summer into fall few months.

The **2021-2022 Winter Crisis Program** began **November 1 and will run through March 31, 2022**. Again this year, we are giving the customer the choice to be seen in one of our county locations for a face-to-face interview or to process the application over the phone.

The Winter Crisis Program (2022WCP) is a heating assistance program that may provide a one-time payment toward a utility and/or bulk fuel service for those meeting the program eligibility requirements. Appointments can be made by calling the automated appointment line at **419-718-0047 OR** by using Google Chrome at app.capappointments.com.

The program requirements are as follows. The applicant must have:

- A utility service that is currently off or in disconnection status for the gas and/or electric service
- A utility service that needs started OR,
- 25% or less supply of bulk fuel (propane, fuel oil, wood, coal) AND,
- Eligible applicant's total household income must be AT or below 175% of the 2021 Federal Poverty Guidelines.

For **All** WCP/HEAP/PIPP Plus interviews that are being completed over the phone, customers will still need to make an appointment using the appointment hotline at **419-719-0047**. An Intake/Outreach worker will call customers at their given appointment times. Customers will need to provide ALL REQUIRED documents by either emailing, faxing or dropping them off to the designated drop boxes at each county office **before** their appointment time. A list of required documents will be on the appointment hotline. For more information, contact your local county CAC office.

BIRTHDAYS

January

Kiara Davis	1
Billy Watts	4
Amanda Holsinger	8
Allyson Edminston	9
Barbara Beal	14
April Thompson	14
Carl Jones	15
Crystal Cox	16
Debbie Schuster	22
Brendalyn Goins	30
Ann Huff	31



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

We are busy here at the Crawford Office. Our Food Pantry is busy as the holidays are upon us. We are receiving donations from Save A Lot on a weekly basis. Local churches are always generous to donate to the Food Pantry.

We are taking donations of new or gently used winter coats for adults and children. We are also in need of hats, gloves, and scarves.

Our Back-Pack Program has been going well, but we still have room for more children. If you know a child in the Galion City School District that could use extra food for the weekend, have the family give us a call.

Our Senior Box Program has a few openings. Anyone age 60 or over in Galion who is income eligible can call us at 419-468-5121.

We have wrapped up our Christmas Adoption Program. We will be assisting over 120 children for Christmas this year. We have rental assistance for those in Crawford County who are behind in their rent due to COVID. Call for more details.

**Morrow Neighborhood Center
Sara Herrera, Center Director
419-946-2009 x-1905**

Greetings from the Morrow Neighborhood Center. The staff is looking forward to carrying many of our newer assistance programs into the 2022 year. Regular HEAP and Emergency HEAP programs have been an asset to our community for many years, and we are thankful to have the opportunity to add Rent/Mortgage and additional utility services.

The Personal Needs Pantry continues to be available to Morrow County residents. The rate of utilization proves the community need for this program, and the Morrow Neighborhood Center is happy to provide this assistance. Personal Needs Pantry can be requested Wednesday afternoons from 1:30 pm- 3:30 pm (Personal Needs Pantry is not be available during the month of November).

Prescription assistance and medication lock boxes are also available. Please call for details on any of these programs.

BIRTHDAYS

February

Christina Bland	3
Haley Gregory	4
Kathy Neff	4
Stacy Berry	5
Janet Reed	6
Samantha Anderson	7
Tracy Franko	8
Jon Kleinknecht	11
Melissa Castle	12
Shannon Ward	15
Shelli Patterson	16
Sherri Penn	18
Heather Ratcliff	18
Becky Brown	20
Tatiana Cordle	20
Jennifer Swartz	21
Lindi Holfinger	22
Gladys Shipley	27



Home Weatherization Assistance Program

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

We are entering the half-way point of the Grant year for Weatherization, EPP, and Community Connections programs. We are at the half-way point of our goals for Weatherization. We spent the majority of Community Connections, and received additional funds for the program. The AEP program and Warm Choice grant year end this month. We did some restructuring in the department and added a Program Assistant position as well as a second Office Clerk position. We look forward to continuing to stay on pace to hit our goals for our programs.

8 Ways to winter-proof your home:

Install Storm Doors: A storm door is an additional outer door that adds protection in harsh, winter months. That means you're losing less warm air and keeping cold air out of your home.

Caulk the Gaps: To stop cold drafts from chilling your home, get out your caulking gun. Check for little gaps along doors and window frames. To find where there are leaky spots, have someone blow air from a hair dryer through suspicious gaps, while you hold a candle along the inside of both window and door frames. If the light flickers, there's a draft.

DIY a Draft Snake: You can buy draft snakes in stores or online.

Bubble Wrap Your Windows: Inefficient windows are one of the biggest culprits when it comes to winter heating loss. If yours are old, chances are they're not up to the job of keeping necessary heat inside your home where it belongs.

Watch Your Thermostat: Turn down the thermostat when you're away from the home, and also before heading to bed. A programmable thermostat can be set to coincide with your alarm clock and your work day so the heat is already on as soon as you need it.

Add Extra Insulation: If your attic isn't insulated, all that warm air is escaping from your home. Adding extra insulation in the attic, in the walls of an attached garage, or in the basement ceiling are some of the best ways to keep your house warm and cozy this winter.

Change the Direction of the Ceiling Fan: Chances are you only use your ceiling fans in the summer and leave them switched off all winter. However, if you change the direction of the fan, you can actually help distribute warm air in the room. Counter-clockwise rotation creates a cool breeze, while clockwise rotation pushes warm air into the room.

Remove You're A/C Unit: Taking the time to remove the A/C unit from your window prevents cold air from sneaking through cracks. If you can't manage to remove it, invest in a heavy tarp to cover the unit during the winter.



Safety Committee Members

740-387-1039

Bev Kuenzli	Ext. 1104
Bob Foreman	Ext. 1201
Debbie Shuster	Ext. 1109
Paula Langenderfer	Ext. 1130
Tammy Crabtree	Ext. 1619
Tracey Rector	Ext. 1313
Sara Herrera	Ext. 1905

BIRTHDAYS

March

Loretta Gast	2
Grace Lingrel	3
Rita Hawkins	7
Joe Devany	13
Breanna Grimes	13
Becky Dutton	14
Timothy Holland	14
LaVonne Casteel	21
Karen Wise	24
Mari Medina	27
Julie Knotts	28
Christina Ziegler	28
Raven Holloway	30
Rhonda Scheff	31



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

We have begun making plans for the upcoming VITA tax filing season. With COVID still in the forefront of our minds, we plan to be appointment-only again this year to minimize the amount of people here at one time. The tax preparers will meet with you to go over your paperwork and have you fill out all of the forms the IRS requires. Once your tax return is complete and has been reviewed for accuracy, you will be called for your appointment to review your taxes and take them with you. Once you have reviewed the return and approved it, your return will be electronically filed. We encourage individuals to have a bank account set up for direct deposit. Your refund will be back to you much faster, and the IRS prefers direct deposit as well.



I am thankful for all of our staff who continue to serve the community with many different programs. Along with VITA, we offer assistance with prescriptions, COVID-related loss of income, personal needs pantry, payee services, help with obtaining your state ID and/or birth certificates for job related purposes, utilities, housing, and meeting the needs of seniors through the Marion County Council on Aging.

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.