Community Action in Wisconsin

Creating Local Opportunities for Economic Self-Sufficiency

WISCAP

Poverty in Wisconsin

According to the most recent US Census Bureau report, more than 730,000 Wisconsin residents live in poverty, representing over 13% of Wisconsin's population. The Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) believes that all of us are vulnerable to poverty and that the costs and consequences of poverty have significant effects on everybody, whether poor or not. Poverty is the cause of unnecessary and preventable suffering among millions of Americans and thousands of Wisconsinites of all ages. The economic and social costs are enormous. We believe there are cost-effective solutions to poverty and that implementing these cost-effective solutions helps everyone in the community. Through efforts that create jobs that pay living wages with benefits, that provide for safe and affordable housing, that make healthcare both affordable and accessible and that expand education we can all, together – with communities in action, eliminate poverty.

How Do Community Action Agencies Help?

Every year, Community Action Agencies analyze community needs and identify strategies that will work best in attacking poverty; with a full scale 'community needs assessment' every three years to identify major poverty problems and the needs of local residents and their communities. Each Community Action Agency is unique because its programs reflect the needs of its local communities, which are prioritized by its local Board of Directors consisting of local community, government and low-income representation. Please refer to the WISCAP website for more information on Community Action at www.wiscap.org.

In 2011…

367,670 low income and working poor residents of Wisconsin turned to Community Action for help!

Of those residents:

- 60% had incomes below the federal poverty level
- 7,876 were homeless
- 44% were children
- 13% were over 55
- 55% were female
- 64% were caucasian
- 36% were people of color

To address the problems of poverty and create economic opportunity, Wisconsin's Community Action Agencies & Special Purpose Agencies mobilized $206 million in federal, state, local and private resources in 2011:

- **$138 million – Federal**
- **$31 million – State**
- **$29 million – Private**
- **$8 million – Local**

2011 Program Highlights……

Community Action Creates Safe and Affordable Housing

Helping low-income families with safe and affordable housing was a critical component in the work of Wisconsin's Community Action network in 2011. WISCAP's member agencies helped 3,101 low-income families obtain and/or maintain safe and affordable housing during the year; this assistance taking the form of homeownership counseling, down payment assistance and foreclosure mitigation. In addition, over 17,400 low-income households were provided with emergency rent or mortgage assistance. Because of help from a WISCAP member agency, 180 families were able to purchase a home in their community during 2011. Wisconsin Community Action Agencies (CAAs) who serve as owners/managers of affordable housing properties created 100 affordable housing units last year. On a larger scale, CAAs were responsible for preserving and improving 7,444 affordable housing units. Finally, through active participation in local 'Continuum of Care' programs created to address the plague of homelessness, WISCAP member agencies provided temporary shelter and other assistance to 2,311 households.

Community Action Provides for Energy Efficiency and Lower Bills

Wisconsin's Weatherization Assistance Program is a proven success in making homes of low-income families more energy efficient, safer and healthier. Thirteen of WISCAP's CAAs weatherized a total of 6,470 homes in 2011, using a combination of federal funds and state public benefits resources, as well as the last of federal stimulus money provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The weatherization program, which has been in existence for more than 30 years, provides energy efficiency services such as insulation and furnace repair/replacement – measures leading to proven average savings, per year, of $435 in heating and cooling costs (based on 2011 prices). In addition, five Community Action Agencies contracted with their local county government in 2011 to provide energy bill payment assistance to eligible low-income households. These agencies – serving eight counties – provided 41,309 households during the year with a one-time bill payment averaging $455.

Community Action Assists Rural Communities

Since 1992, WISCAP's **Rural Community Assistance Program** (RCAP) has provided training and technical assistance to low- and moderate-income rural communities on matters and issues related to water and wastewater systems planning, development and management. Small cities, towns, villages, sanitary districts and tribal communities have benefited from RCAP assistance with over 400 projects completed to date. During 2011, RCAP staff provided assistance to 36 communities implementing 47 water/wastewater projects. Through this work, RCAP was able to leverage $3.65 million in federal funds for 5 Wisconsin communities: the Village of Bruce (Rusk County), the City of Mellen (Ashland County), the Town of Mercer (Iron County), the City of Shell Lake (Washburn County) and the Westboro Sanitary District (Taylor County). Additionally, WISCAP's **Tribal Circuit Rider Program** provides services and technical assistance to all 11 Wisconsin tribes.

In November 2011, a new WISCAP program, **Community Development Services** (CDS), was initiated. CDS offers education, training and technical assistance to rural Wisconsin communities, on a fee-for-service basis, in the planning, development and management of community facilities (beyond just water/wastewater). CDS builds community staff capacity and expertise to develop, implement and manage community development projects such as: housing; downtown development and public facilities development including: city/town/village halls, police/fire stations, community centers, health care facilities and libraries. In the first two months of operation, four villages contracted for community development services. During 2012, WISCAP's CDS will partner with USDA Rural Development in the promotion of the latter's Community Facilities Program; making unprecedented funding available at an unprecedented, low, long term interest rate.

Community Action Helps Low Wage Workers Get Better Jobs and Benefits

The **Community Action Skills Enhancement Program** helps low-wage workers obtain better paying jobs with benefits by assisting them to get a degree or certification at a technical or community college. Participants receive help paying for tuition, child care and transportation to attend classes, as well as individualized career planning, case management, referral and job search support. In 2011, fifteen (15) Community Action Agencies (CAAs) and United Migrant Opportunities Services (UMOS) provided Skills Enhancement services to 425 participants with funding from the Wisconsin Department of Children & Families (DCF) and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). In the 18 months since state funding was approved, 454 people have been enrolled in Skills Enhancement, of which 1/3 have completed training. Ninety-nine (99) graduates have obtained new jobs and report earning, on average, $8,800 more per year – an increase of 71%. Each graduate is projected to earn an average of $300,000 in increased wages during their lifetime. Graduates also report that access to employer-sponsored health care has increased 400%. Despite the challenging economy, the Community Action Skills Enhancement Program continues to be a solid investment helping low-wage workers to improve their economic self-sufficiency.

Community Action Creates Jobs and Businesses

Since 1989, Wisconsin's CAAs have provided business development services to low-income entrepreneurs through the **Job and Business Development Program (JBD)** with funds from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). JBD helps entrepreneurs to develop business, financial and marketing plans and obtain financing to start or expand small businesses. State funding was unexpectedly suspended in the latter half of 2011 while DWD considered whether to lapse JBD monies in the face of anticipated revenue shortfalls. Following legislative and agency communication with a receptive administration, the value of JBD as a job-creating program was reaffirmed and program funding was subsequently preserved. Despite the 6-month hiatus, eight (8) CAAs and Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC) launched 34 new small businesses and assisted 16 existing businesses to sustain or expand their operations. In all, JBD created 53 new jobs and preserved 16 more. JBD businesses received $288,000 in loans and grants. In addition, CAAs utilized funds from other sources to assist non-low-income businesses in the creation of 69 additional jobs. Since the program's inception, JBD has started 1,934 new businesses and created 5,610 new jobs.

Community Action Advances Food Security

Thirteen (13) CAAs and 3 non-CAA partners coordinated the distribution of 14 million pounds of government commodities in 2011 – valued at $8.7 million – to 329 food pantries, meal sites and shelters in 71 Wisconsin counties. Food pantries distributed an additional 30 million pounds of private food to needy households. Pantries served an average of nearly 200,000 people every month – an increase of 53% over the 2007 pre-recession period. Meal sites and shelters served an average of 152,000 meals each month. In addition, the Social Development Commission's (SDC) Youth Food Program served 1.75 million meals and snacks to Milwaukee area children, and the Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin's CAC Gleaners food recovery program distributed nearly 1 million pounds of prepared/perishable food in Dane County.

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Community Action Programs & Services

5/12

Program	ADVOCAP	CAP Services	CWCAC	CACSCW, Inc.	CA, Inc.	Couleecap	Indianhead	Lakeshore	NEWCAP	North Central	Northwest	R/K CAA	SDC	Southwest	West CAP	WDEOC	CWAG	FRH	UMOS
Education/Skills Enhancement	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦			♦
Adult Literacy Skills	*						*			*		*	*		*				*
Skills Enhancement Program	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*
Financial Literacy Education	*		*			*	*		*		*	*	*	*		*			*
Employment Training	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*			*			*
Economic/Business Development	♦	♦	♦			♦	♦		♦	♦		♦		♦		♦			♦
Business Development	*	*	*			*	*		*	*		*		*		*			*
Business Revolving Loan Programs	*	*	*			*	*									*			
Energy / Utilities	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	
Emergency Fuel Assistance Programs			*			*			*		*		*			*	*	*	
Weatherization Programs	*	*	*		*	*	*		*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*		
Telecommunications Assistance				*															
Food Security/Environmental	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦		♦
Emergency Food Assistance			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*		*
Community Garden Programs	*		*	*			*	*	*		*	*							
Community Meal Prgms/Holiday Baskets	*			*					*	*	*	*							
Nutrition Education	*		*	*		*		*	*		*	*		*	*	*			
Housing	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Transitional Housing/Homeless Shelters	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*			*	*	*			*
Rental Property Management/Development	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*		*			*	*				*
Rent Payment Assistance/Section 8			*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*			*	
Rental Assistance Programs			*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*			*	
Homeow nership Programs	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*					*	*	*	*		*
Foreclosure Assistance	*				*	*		*	*			*		*	*			*	
Home Repair Programs / Lead Abatement			*		*	*	*							*					
Housing Revolving Loan Fund	*	*					*	*	*		*			*		*			
Home Repair Programs	*	*	*			*	*		*				*	*	*	*			
Headstart/Child Development	♦	♦					♦					♦		♦		♦			♦
Parenting/Family Support	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦		♦
Childcare Provision/Assistance/Referrals	*	*	*		*			*	*				*	*		*			*
Parenting Classes	*	*						*			*		*	*		*			
Clothing Assistance			*	*		*	*		*		*			*		*			*
Fatherhood Initative	*	*			*							*	*			*			*
Violence Prevention/Victim Services	*	*					*										*		
Legal Services								*			*						*		
Physical/Mental Health		♦			♦	♦	♦		♦		♦	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦		♦
Women's Health					*				*		*		*	*		*			*
MA/WIC Programs											*	*		*			*		
AODA/Mental Health		*				*	*						*				*		*
Dental Programs		*										*	*	*		*			*
Home Healthcare							*												
Refugee/Migrant Services	♦	♦							♦	♦									♦
Senior Services	♦					♦			♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦		
Tax Preparation Assistance		♦									♦	♦	♦						♦
Transportation	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦		♦		♦			♦	♦	♦			
Car Purchase Programs	*	*	*		*	*			*		*		*	*	*	*			
Youth and Young AdultServices	♦	♦	♦		♦		♦	♦	♦	♦			♦			♦		♦	
Education Skills	*		*				*		*	*			*			*			
Fresh Start	*	*			*		*									*			
Mentoring Program							*			*									
Juvenile Justice/Violence Prevention								*											
Homeless/Runaw ay Programs		*	*						*									*	
Employment/Living Skills	*		*		*		*	*	*										

WHAT IS WISCAP?

Wisconsin Community Action Program Association is the statewide voluntary association of Wisconsin's 16 Community Action Agencies and 3 special purpose agencies with statewide anti-poverty missions: the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, the Foundation for Rural Housing, and the United Migrant Opportunity Services.

The Association was incorporated on March 1, 1974 with the intent of its members that the cause of economic self-sufficiency for Wisconsin's low income households would be strengthened by working together on issues of policy, resource mobilization, training & development and advocacy.

For over 37 years, WISCAP has served the needs of its member agencies in various ways: helping to identify and sponsor professional training in anti-poverty areas, facilitating quarterly meetings of Community Action Agency leadership staff and Board members, serving as a conduit for resource development needs of its members, advocating for public policy conducive to the locally-developed goals of its member agencies and advocating for laws, rules and regulations which support economic opportunity efforts, community development, and locally-designed strategies and procedures.

WISCAP is organized as a private non-profit corporation governed by a Board of Directors comprised of the Executive Director from each of its member agencies. Core funding for WISCAP is provided through member agency dues. Program and training funds are provided in part by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Community Services, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the generous contributions from sponsors of our conferences and training events.

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