WISCAP Annual Report

Innovation
- Individual Development Accounts
- Community Development
- Affordable Housing

Community
- Job & Business Development
- Crisis Intervention
- Energy Assistance

Vision
- Family Development
- Youth Programs

WISCAP Wisconsin Community Action Program Association

May 2001
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On the cover:
Family who purchased a home under the Fresh Start Program
Western Dairyland EOC
Family receiving food assistance
Community Action, Inc.
Head Start graduating class
Racine/Kenosha CAA
### Table of Contents

**Letter from the President and Executive** .................................................. 2  
Innovation in Wisconsin

**Public Policy** ................................................................................................. 4  
Community Action & Citizen Participation  
Low-Income Public Benefits

**Training and Technical Assistance** .............................................................. 6  
Quarterly Meetings  
A Home for Everyone  
Women & Poverty Conference  
Tax Credit Training  
WISCAP Online

**Rural Community Assistance Program (RCAP)** ......................................... 8

**2000 Annual Meeting Awards** ................................................................. 10

**Agency Highlights** ..................................................................................... 12  
ADVOCAP, Inc. ................................................. 13  
CAP Services ............................................... 14  
Central Wisconsin CAC ......................... 15  
Community Action, Inc. ......................... 16  
Community Action Coalition for South Central WI ............................. 17  
Indianhead CAA ........................................ 18  
Lakeshore CAP ................................. 19  
NEWCAP ................................................. 20  
North Central CAP .............................. 21  
Northwest CSA ..................................... 22  
Racine/Kenosha CAA ......................... 23  
Social Development Commission ................. 24  
Southwest CAP .................................. 25  
West Central CAA ......................... 26  
Western Dairyland EOC ....................... 27  
Wisconsin Coulee Region CAP ............... 28  
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups ................. 29  
Foundation for Rural Housing ............... 30  
United Migrant Opportunity Services .......... 31

**Success of Community Action** ............................................................... 32  
Community Action Benefits Wisconsin  
Who Community Action Agencies Serve
Dear Friends,

The Wisconsin Community Action Program Association staff and Board of Directors are proud to present the 2001 WISCAP Annual Report. Once again we are pleased to share this summary of the important work carried on by the WISCAP staff, its 16 member Community Action Agencies and 3 Special Purpose Agencies. Pursuing a common vision of social and economic justice, WISCAP and its members make a great contribution to the high quality of life for which Wisconsin is celebrated.

This year we have chosen to highlight Innovation as the theme for our Annual Report. While the enduring strength and effectiveness of Community Action owes much to its ability to match and tailor services to the unique local needs of each agency and to exercise local control and decision making, its ongoing tradition of program innovation also plays an important role. From its idealistic beginnings to its idealistic present, Community Action in Wisconsin continues to tackle the causes and effects of poverty with creativity, flexibility, enthusiasm and innovation.

It was a Community Action Agency in Wisconsin that first piloted a federally funded low-income weatherization program in 1974. Now over 700 agencies across America operate this great cost-saving program. Wisconsin was one of the first states selected to participate in the Alliance to Save Energy’s Oil Furnace Retro-Fit pilot project that was later incorporated as an eligible measure for the federal weatherization program.

In 1990 WISCAP through its members initiated its own innovative and highly successful Job and Business Development program to assist low-income entrepreneurs. In 1996, ADVOCAP piloted Wisconsin’s first Individual Development Account program, a low-income asset building strategy now implemented through Community Action Agencies across the state. These two initiatives are described in more detail on the next page and are just a couple examples of a very long list of Community Action innovations whose impact is still growing.

And this innovative spirit continues to flourish among WISCAP’s member agencies. Recent job and business innovations such as Western Dairyland’s Incubator Without Walls, CAP Services’ web-based Virtual Incubator and West CAP’s Shared Commercial Kitchen all enhance low-income self-employment opportunities. West CAP’s JumpStart program connects TANF eligible households to employment and the rest of community life by facilitating their purchase of safe, economical and reliable cars. The Milwaukee Social Development Commission helps homeless families with alcohol and substance abuse through their unique and effective comprehensive Transitional Living Center. Indianhead CAA works collaboratively with two other CAAs and Human Services Departments in seven counties to provide in-home health care and services to the elderly.

Poverty is a tough nut to crack, even in times of widespread prosperity. But as this report shows, Community Action in Wisconsin, locally controlled, responsive, cost effective and innovative, rises to this challenge every day.

Sincerely,

Peter Kilde, President-WISCAP
Executive Director-West Central CAA

Jackie Lawrence, Executive Director
WISCAP
Creating Innovative Economic Opportunity

Community Action strives to build strong and healthy families and communities at the local level. Local Boards of Directors of each Community Action Agency approve plans that identify both local poverty problems as well as the strengths, assets, and capacities of the people and neighborhoods in their communities. Community Action Agency staff and Board members, together with community partners, develop new ideas and projects to provide economic opportunities for low-income people. This commitment to community problem solving and program development makes each Community Action Agency unique.

The 16 Community Action Agencies in Wisconsin also work with each other and WISCAP to function as a network of agencies providing economic opportunities to low-income people across the state. Services are provided at the local level while WISCAP provides overall management for statewide programs. Agencies have joined together in two innovative program efforts that assist low-income people and families in developing economic assets and the capacity to leave poverty and gain economic independence.

Job & Business Development (JBD Program)

Since 1990, the Job and Business Development Program has helped low-income business entrepreneurs start and expand successful small businesses in Wisconsin. In the last 10 years, the JBD program has assisted in the creation of more than 900 small businesses and 1,600 jobs. Local agencies provide business management and financial planning assistance to entrepreneurs and often provide access to small seed-capital financing opportunities for the business through agency sponsored “revolving loan” funds.

Local agencies have also secured additional federal or private resources to respond to locally identified needs. These resources have created opportunities including a “shared kitchen” through West CAP in the city of Menomonie and helping food industry entrepreneurs gain access to a certified commercial kitchen and markets, and an on-line “virtual business incubator” providing business start-up and expansion assistance from CAP Services at www.virtualincubate.com.

Individual Development Accounts (IDA Program)

Wisconsin’s Community Action Network has helped more than 400 low-income individuals and families begin to build a reserve of personal savings for the future purchase of their first home, to start a business, or to purchase post-secondary education studies. WISCAP and 15 Community Action Agencies have joined together with 25 financial institutions including local banks and credit unions to create one of the very few statewide IDA program efforts in the nation.

Through the IDA program, low-income people have the chance to open an IDA Account at a local financial institution, participate in financial literacy and budget counseling activities, establish a pattern of regular savings and receive matching funds ($2 for every $1 saved) for saving towards the purchase of a home, starting a business, or pursuing a degree at a university or technical college. The collective economic benefits of the Community Action IDA Program by the end of 2002 will include:

- Help almost 1000 working poor families in Wisconsin open IDAs at banks and credit unions across the state.
- Collectively those 1000 families will save about $1 million of their own earnings.
- At least 500 of those families will use their IDA savings to buy their first home. Through the program and partnering financial institutions, they will gain access to more than $30 million in first mortgages.
- Another 300 of those families are likely to use their IDAs to start their own businesses and are likely to create 600 jobs.
Public Policy

WISCAP's Role in Policy Development

- Our goal is to develop and promote public policy that reduces poverty through Wisconsin's Community Action Network.
- We work with member organizations to formulate anti-poverty public policy priorities.
- We undertake activities in pursuit of those priorities.
- We provide information to member agencies and others on state and federal legislative proposals and actions affecting low-income people.
- We provide training and technical assistance to member organizations on the opportunities, requirements, and limitations for legislative activities.

Community Action & Citizen Participation

Community Action has a deep respect for citizen participation in government and in the political life as well as the economic life of our communities. Citizen participation, including the participation of poor people in decisions that affect the poor, is at the very heart of Community Action.

From the very onset of our organization 35 years ago, we have structured our own agencies to encourage active participation of folks at the local level to solve community problems and eliminate poverty. We believe that the entire community--the private sector and the government sector along with low-income people--has much to contribute and gain by working together on behalf of efforts that help people lead lives of greater independence and dignity.

WISCAP encourages all of the people of Community Action, the volunteers and members of local Boards of Directors as well as the low-income participants in our programs, to communicate with legislators and policy makers on local needs and what works in their communities.

WISCAP's Public Policy Interests

More than 500,000 low-income people sought and received help from their local Community Action Agency in 1999. Some came for help in buying their first home or to fix up their current home or for weatherization or energy assistance. Others came for help in finding a better job or to start a small business. Still others may have come for help from a food pantry, in search of shelter, an adult literacy program, Head Start preschool, or other Community Action Agency programs.

WISCAP is committed to public policy that supports a comprehensive approach to eliminating poverty at the local level. We will promote policy at the state and federal levels that address the needs of the poor and engage all sectors of the community--local government, private sector, and low-income people--in solving local poverty problems.

State Sen. Gwen Moore (center) recently visited with the some members of the Social Development Commission management team in Milwaukee. From left are: Dave Roettgen, finance director; Gail Porath, director, Head Start; Diane Robinson, Purchasing; Jim Minner, director Communications and Government Relations; Sen. Moore; SDC Executive Director Deborah Blanks, and Jan Stenlund, director, Program Services.

WISCAP Annual Report 2001
LOW-INCOME PUBLIC BENEFITS

A major public policy accomplishment of WISCAP, our member organizations, and our collaborators was the enactment of the "Public Benefits" provisions of Reliability 2000 (R2K) as part of Wisconsin's Biennial Budget for 1999-2001 (1999 Wisconsin Act 9).

This law provides permanent funding for energy-efficiency programs such as weatherization, and financial assistance to meet the energy needs of low-income households in Wisconsin. The last year saw member agencies and WISCAP staff deeply involved in the development of rules and procedures needed to make Public Benefits a reality consistent with the vision spelled out in the law. Funding became available under the new program in late fall of 2000, just in time to alleviate the hardships being felt by low-income families due to some of the sharpest increases in heating fuel in decades.

By the end of January 2001, over 71,000 low-income households have been served by a mix of new Public Benefits funding and federal energy assistance. The end of the heating season would see an additional 30,000 to 34,000 receiving benefits, an increase of almost 20% from the previous year. Due to the timely arrival of this new initiative, while heating costs were increasing 50% benefit levels increased 48%. This allowed low-income households to almost hold level in their battle for economic self-sufficiency and make, just a little easier, the many hard choices they are forced daily to make between the essentials of living.

WISCAP remains especially proud of this accomplishment now that the benefits to low-income households and communities have started to appear. Over the past six years, WISCAP played a major role in shaping the substance of Public Benefits, working closely with other low-income advocates, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, legislative leaders, Class A utilities and customer coalitions.

THE PUBLIC POLICY CHALLENGE

WISCAP remains challenged by the paradox of poverty in the midst of great prosperity in Wisconsin. We believe that economic prosperity within the state enables us, and calls on policy makers, to create opportunities for all residents to participate in and benefit from that prosperity.

We believe that Community Action has been the source of innovative solutions to poverty at the local level. Wisconsin’s CAAs have a proven track record of developing innovative anti-poverty projects in a collaborative style involving many organizations. Examples include: our development of the first weatherization programs in the nation during the mid-1970's; the use of Individual Development Accounts to assist low-income families in building assets; the creation of the Job and Business Development program to assist low-income people in starting their own businesses; and our innovative work in creating affordable rental housing and home ownership for the poor throughout the State.

We look forward to working with policy makers to create economic opportunity for all Wisconsin residents.
Training and Technical Assistance

QUARTERLY MEETINGS

WISCAP meets on a quarterly basis to review the work of the Association and build on the success of Community Action. Quarterly meetings provide an opportunity for networking and training. In addition to the business of the Association, several roundtables meet to allow staff and board members to share ideas and develop skills. Roundtable topics include: energy assistance; family development; food security; housing; Individual Development Accounts; job and business development; management; planning; public relations and transportation. WISCAP uses roundtable to provide professional development and to strengthen partnerships between Community Action and state agencies. Capacity building opportunities provided through roundtables have included: board training; community fundraising; food stamp eligibility requirements; Individual Development Accounts; prescription drug assistance; lead abatement; development of a continuum of care network; child support/receiver system; media relations; maintaining a positive workplace; tax credits; and best practices in safe and affordable housing.

A HOME FOR EVERYONE

With safe and affordable homeownership moving out of reach for a growing number of Wisconsin residents, 200 housing advocates, community developers, property owners, and government officials came together to talk about solutions at the 4th annual “A Home for Everyone” Conference at the Hotel Mead in Wisconsin Rapids August 16-17, 2000. The conference was hosted by the Wisconsin Collaborative for Affordable Housing and included discussions on Smart Growth legislation, property management, fair housing, home ownership, lead abatement, and alternative mechanisms to affordable housing.

“Each year this conference has shown tremendous growth and really helps participants look at solid solutions to affordable housing,” stated Sandra Devlin, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. “The success and diversity of this event demonstrates a growing commitment and interest in the availability of affordable housing.”

The Wisconsin Collaborative for Affordable Housing includes a wide variety of organizations committed to affordable housing that come together each year to host the “A Home for Everyone” conference. Among the Collaborative members are the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – Wisconsin office, the State of Wisconsin Division of Housing and Intergovernmental Relations, the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA), University of Wisconsin – Extension, the Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development.

WISCAP President Peter Kilde, Conference Honoree Chuck Hill (formerly of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago) and WISCAP Energy & Housing Program Director Robert Jones.
WISCAP'S
WOMEN & POVERTY CONFERENCE

Mary Lue Brister grew up in poverty, knowing only violence and anger. At the age of 12 she ran away from home and lived under a bridge in Minneapolis or occasionally stayed with friends. “Hunger isn’t the worst, you get used to being hungry, but you never get used to being cold.”

“The one thing that characterizes Mary Lue is her positive attitude. Everyday is just terrific,” stated Sally Schrader of Indianhead Community Action Agency. Sally has worked with Mary Lue in starting her own photography business and nominated Mary Lue to receive the Woman of Courage Award at the 15th Annual Women & Poverty Conference sponsored by WISCAP. Over 250 participants from across the state were in attendance, and rose to a standing ovation to recognize the courage and strength of this woman.

Also honored at the event was the UW-Rock County Partnership for Parents Program, which assists low-income women in returning to school.

The program provides financial assistance with admission/application fees, testing fees, tuition, books, childcare and transportation to a maximum of 10 academic qualified participants attending UW-Rock County each semester.

The conference featured a variety of guest speakers including: Nancy Amidei, University of Washington; State Senator Carol Reesler; Susan Dreyfus, Administrator-Division of Children and Family Services; Mona Steele, Wisconsin Women’s Network; Carol Medaris, Wisconsin Council on Children & Families; and Arlene Scalzo, Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development (WHEDA). The conference is an annual event which supports the sharing of ideas, development of new strategies, greater integration of service provision, and a better understanding of how low-income women and helping organizations can work together toward self-sufficiency.

TAX CREDIT TRAINING

WISCAP, working in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Department of Revenue, Department of Workforce Development, Wisconsin Institute of Certified Public Accountants, and the Wisconsin Association of Accountants, offered six regional training sessions on tax credits for low-income families. The training focused on assisting social service and non-profit organizations to help low-income individuals and families to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit, Homestead Credit and Working Families Tax Credit. Over 280 people participated from across the state.

WISCAP ONLINE

www.wiscap.org

WISCAP has expanded the use of its website to provide information updates, training opportunities, meeting and conference information, and links to poverty research, funding resources, and state and national organizations. The WISCAP newsletter, fact sheets, tax credit information and the annual report are now available online as well as information on the history of Community Action and the wide range of programs administered by WISCAP, including the Job and Business Development Program, Individual Development Accounts, and Rural Community Assistance Program.
Rural Community Assistance Program

The Rural Community Assistance Program (RCAP) is part of a nationwide network helping rural communities address drinking water supply and wastewater treatment needs. The program provides training and technical assistance to low- and moderate-income communities with needs related to water and wastewater systems. Services are provided at no cost to the community and typically include on-site assistance with technical, financial, and managerial capacity building.

SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH RCAP

Facility Development
- Engineer Hiring/Selection Process
- Assessment of Alternatives
- Affordability Analysis of Alternatives
- Funding Applications
- Community Education

Financial Management
- Development of Budgets
- Funding Reports
- Development of User Charge System
- Rate Analysis

Computerization
- Hardware Selection Assistance
- Software Selection Assistance
- Records and Accounting
- Billing and Reports

Planning
- Community Needs Assessment
- Identification of Financial Resources
- Community Participation
- Income Surveys for Funding Applications

Capacity Building
- Self-Help Emphasis
- Leadership Development
- Partnership Formation
- Staff Training

Contact RCAP for more information
608/244-0407
brown@chorus.net

RCAP Rural Development Specialist Scott Koegler (center) providing financial assistance to Village of Yuba officials.
Town of Pershing

The unincorporated community of Donald is located in the Town of Pershing (Taylor County). Donald is served by private wells. There are several drinking water issues facing the community. These include groundwater contamination from a leaking underground storage tank, and the lack of water service to some facilities. RCAP is partnering with Wisconsin DNR to assess affordable options to provide safe drinking water to the community, and identify potential grant/loan sources.

Jamestown Sanitary District #3

The Jamestown Sanitary District #3 serves the small, unincorporated community of Louisburg (Grant County). The wastewater treatment system was constructed in 1973, and needs to be upgraded. To assist, RCAP obtained a Water Quality Planning Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to examine treatment alternatives. The grant resulted in the development of an affordable wastewater treatment option. During 2001, RCAP is assisting Jamestown S.D. #3 with loan applications and project coordination.

RCAP Rural Development Specialist Kathy Cartwright and Jamestown President Floyd Timmerman discuss the operation of the wastewater system.

SERVING WISCONSIN COMMUNITIES

WISCAP’s Rural Community Assistance Program has completed over 250 projects. RCAP is currently assisting 22 communities in 16 counties:

Town of Albion, Dane County
Bad River Band of Chippewa, Ashland County
Chelsea Sanitary District, Taylor County
Fulton Sanitary District #2, Rock County
Iron River Sanitary District, Bayfield County
Village of Ironton, Sauk County
Jamestown Sanitary District #3, Grant County
Village of Mason, Bayfield County
Menominee Indian Tribe, Menominee County
Oak Park Community, Grant County
Town of Pershing, Taylor County
Pine Creek Sanitary District, Trempeleau County
Village of Readstown, Vernon County
Richmond Sanitary District #1, St. Croix County
Town of South Lancaster, Grant County
Village of Tony, Rusk County
Village of Unity, Marathon County
Village of Warrens, Monroe County
Waumandee Sanitary District, Buffalo County
Westboro Sanitary District, Taylor County
Woodland Terrace, Grant County
Village of Yuba, Richland County
2000 Annual Meeting Awards

GAYLORD NELSON HUMAN SERVICES AWARD

The distinguished WISCAP Gaylord Nelson Human Services Award is named after Gaylord Nelson who served 10 years in the Wisconsin state senate, two terms as Governor of Wisconsin, and represented the state of Wisconsin in the United States Senate for 18 years from 1962 to 1980.

During his tenure in the United States Senate, Gaylord Nelson was an outspoken advocate for the poor. He was one of the original sponsors of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 creating the War on Poverty and Community Action Agencies. He championed many Community Action Programs including the national home weatherization program modeled after existing programs at CAAs in Wisconsin.

WISCAP presents this award in honor of this great man to a state or federal elected official for their work on behalf of low-income people.

WILLIAM A. STEIGER AWARD

WISCAP President Peter Kilde and Jackie Lawrence present the William A. Steiger Human Services Award to Representative Tom Sykora (Assembly District 67).

This award is named in honor of US Congressman William Steiger, a native of Oshkosh, who represented Wisconsin's Six District in Congress for 12 years. William Steiger was first elected to Congress in 1966, and served until 1978, when he died suddenly at the age of 40.

William Steiger was a strong supporter of ADVOCAP and Wisconsin's Community Action Agencies. He served as member of the House Committee on Education and Labor, as well as its subcommittee on Equal Opportunities which oversaw the nation's War on Poverty. Congressman Steiger was the principle author of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), and led the congressional effort to create the Community Services Administration after the President of his own political party sought to abolish the Office of Economic Opportunity.

WISCAP presents this award in honor of his leadership, and efforts in support of Community Action to a state or federal legislator for their work on behalf of low-income people.

MEDIA AWARD

CAAs not only assist low-income people, but help to develop and improve communities. As locally governed and operated agencies, CAAs depend on community involvement and support for their success. Local media can have a significant impact on community investment and the effectiveness of their efforts.

This award honors print or broadcast media services that contribute to the mission of Community Action and provide a positive portrayal of low-income people and solutions to poverty.

WISCAP President Peter Kilde and Jackie Lawrence present the William A. Steiger Human Services Award to Senator Kevin Shibilske (SD 21).
SPECIAL AWARDS

WISCAP gives several special awards based on nominations from member agencies that honor dedicated community advocates, CAA volunteers, legislators, successful small business entrepreneurs, community and state partners, and CAA Board members from across the state. In 2000, WISCAP honored State Senator Carol Roessler for her support of Community Action, State Senator Chuck Chvala and the Customer's First Coalition for their support of Public Benefits, Legislative Aide Susan Marcott, Advocate Linda Nederlo, and Entrepreneur Scott Langer.

PRESIDENT’S AWARD

Each year the President of WISCAP recognizes an organization or individual for their work and efforts in support of the mission of Community Action and the Association. At times this has been a CAA that has demonstrated extraordinary leadership, a legislator or special advocate, or a community organization that has been exemplary in its actions in advocating for low-income people. The 2000 Award was presented to Karl Pnazek, CEO of CAP Services.

OUTSTANDING EMPLOYEE AWARD

Community Action Agencies have the privilege of working with many hard working and dedicated staff that make the mission of Community Action a reality. Many spend countless hours on their own time working to ensure that low-income people are provided the opportunities, skills and support that they need to succeed.

WISCAP honors the dedication of Community Action staff with the Outstanding Employee Award.
Agency Highlights

Wisconsin Community Action Agencies are independent, non-profit corporations or commissions. The purpose of Community Action Agencies as defined in the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, is to focus all available resources upon the goal of enabling low-income people to attain the skills, knowledge, motivations, and opportunities needed to become self-sufficient.

Community Action Agencies are clearly defined in both state and federal law. They are formed and governed by local communities, to address specific barriers to self-sufficiency. Their Boards of Directors are composed of one-third local government representatives, at least one-third low-income representatives, and the remainder community and business leaders. A major source of CAAs’ strengths and a unique aspect of each agency is this belief in and utilization of local people to develop solutions to poverty.

Participation of low-income people is an important facet of Community Action. The “maximum feasible participation” of low-income people is sought and valued as a part of the local planning and decision-making process. Through participation on CAA boards and committees, low-income people can also become empowered as effective community leaders.

The Wisconsin Community Action Program Association is a professional association of Wisconsin’s sixteen Community Action Agencies and Special Purpose Agencies. The Association is governed by a Board of Directors with representatives from each member agency. WISCAP has a staff of eleven full-time employees and serves its member agencies as an information clearinghouse, a policy re and advocacy forum, a public information network, training facilities and administrative agency.

WISCAP’s member agencies offer a wide range of programs and services to communities in Wisconsin. The strength of Community Action lies in the fact that each agency is locally controlled by a volunteer board that represents all sectors of the community, and that this board develops a strategy to eliminate poverty that utilizes the strengths of each community. In this way, Community Action Agencies develop a comprehensive approach that links low-income people to a variety of programs and services, and acknowledges that the solution to poverty requires a multifaceted approach. Community Action Agencies not only address the needs of low-income individuals and families, but work to improve the communities as a whole to ensure that all people have the opportunity to work, play and live comfortably in a place they feel safe and proud.

In the following pages, you will see a variety of programs and success stories that highlight some of the innovative services and programs of Community Action Agencies in Wisconsin. These stories represent the diversity in approach and programming that make Community Action Agencies unique and successful. To learn more about the wide range of programs and services offered by our agencies, please contact the WISCAP office or individual agencies.
FRESH START
A New Beginning for Area Teens

High school drop-outs who turned carpenters to build a new house in Fond du Lac also created a path to their own future.

A brand new white ranch home for sale at the corner of Carriage Lane and County Trunk V was constructed by a teenage work crew under a new ADVOCAP program called Fresh Start. The asking price is $116,000. "We've already had offers," noted ADVOCAP Public Relations Director Lewis Rosser. "The home will be sold to a family who meets the county's low-income guidelines."

An open house was held Monday afternoon to recognize the achievements of all who participated, and to express gratitude to more than 40 local organizations, agencies and businesses who provided support. "The house is a by-product of this program," said ADVOCAP Executive Director Michael Bonertz. "At-risk youth are learning basic educational, employment and life skills."

"The crew has worked so hard over the past year overcoming many barriers," said Fresh Start coordinator Paige Reynolds. "They're the ones who deserve the praise." Crew members included Travis Bartow, Selina Cadogan, Tym Hollerup, Jessica Huth, Matt Khania, Randy Mapes, Sarah Mowbray, John Paul, Brian Peterson, Shana Rose and crew leader J. Harvey Trewin. Fresh Start is designed for youth who have dropped out of high school who want to pursue an alternative course of basic academic education and career development.

"I dropped out of Oakfield High School 20 days before graduation," Trewin said. "I was in a lot of trouble. I once spent a week in jail." Now the crew leader plans to stay on for another Fresh Start project "rehabilitating" a house on Maria Lane. "It didn't always go smoothly," he said. "There were lots of ups and downs."

The crew started the project last July, and put on the finishing touches just last week. Jeff Young was ADVOCAP site supervisor for the house. "I received my high school diploma in January," Trewin said. "I know this project was about the house, but to me, it's about rebuilding my life." Trewin is now enrolled at Moraine Park Technical College.

Fresh Start participants between ages 16 and 24 also get help preparing for high school equivalency diplomas, learning life employment skills, vocational training, and mentoring. Juanita Bednarek, dean of students at Goodrich High School, said two students in the At-Risk program at Goodrich also were part of the building crew. "They seemed so proud the other night I stopped by to see the house," she said. "They led me through every room they worked on." "This will enhance, not replace programs offered through our Alternative Learning Center," Bednarek explained.

Rosser said the Fresh Start program began over 30 years ago in Madison and expanded into other communities in 1999 through additional funding opportunities offered by the state. The program in Fond du Lac is the first in the Fox Valley area.

-taken from The Fond du Lac Reporter/Sharon Rosnik
EMPLOYMENT & HOUSING

Oakridge

Waushara County is one of the poorest counties in Wisconsin. Per capita personal income was 86% of the state average. The average worker's weekly earnings represent only 129% of the federal poverty level for a family of three compared to the state average of 129%. Unemployment on a quarterly basis is 35% higher than the state.

A focus group in 1998, arranged by CAP Services with lenders, local business owners, and low-income business entrepreneurs and individuals interested in self-employment, identified three major needs:

- access to timely quality technical assistance
- access to gap financing to help bridge the difference between conventional lending and the entrepreneur's equity investment, and
- access to adequate and affordable facilities customized for individual business needs.

CAP Services found an opportunity to address these needs when they received a call from a local bank. The bank had foreclosed on the Oakridge Center, the former Waucoma Hospital and three adjacent two-bedroom duplexes. At the time of the foreclosure, the hospital ward was being used (and still is today) as a Community-Based Residential Facility providing assisted living to the elderly. The other 11,000 square feet of the building was vacant and in need of repair.

CAP Services staff recommended purchasing and developing it into affordable housing and a commercial business site. The purchase was financed through a one-year loan from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). CAP also received a $420,000 grant from the HUD Rural Housing and Economic Development (RHED) Program. These funds were used to renovate the interior of the vacant space in the former hospital ward as a child care center, an alterations shop and a kitchen for a caterer. All renovations have been completed and the building is now fully leased. The three businesses employ 10 people.

HUD RHED funds are also being used to convert four of the six existing housing units from two-bedroom to three-bedroom units. CAP also received a $440,000 HOME Rental Housing Development grant to build a new four-plex on the site. Each of these units will have three bedrooms and a detached garage. As of April 1, 2001, all six existing units had been renovated and leased. Construction on the four-plex will be completed by June.

Today the Oakridge Center is an attractive resource for the community, providing housing, jobs and the county's licensed first and second shift childcare service. CAP's success with Oakridge has resulted from listening to community needs, developing strategies and mobilizing resources to address those needs, and involving the community. Oakridge represents CAP Services' operating philosophy of identifying what other people see as problems and turning them into opportunities. By effectively packaging federal, state and local resources with innovation, CAP has again been able to increase opportunities for residents of Waushara County.
HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Ground Broken for Pine Grove Apartments

State and local officials braved the cool drizzle last October to attend a special groundbreaking ceremony for the new Pine Grove Apartments in Adams. The project, developed by Central Wisconsin Community Action Council (CWCAC), was initiated through an idea put forward by a local family looking for independent living options for their daughter. The eight-unit apartment building will provide affordable, accessible, and independent housing for developmentally disabled individuals in Adams County.

The building will consist of seven tenant units and one unit for a building manager. It will also include a large community room for residents. The $500,000 project is being funded through a $286,000 grant from the Wisconsin Division of Housing and Intergovernmental Relations, $27,000 in private donations, and a $185,000 low-interest loan secured through the Adams County Board of Supervisors.

Several officials were on hand with encouraging words for groundbreaking including State Representatives Marlin Schneider and Joan Wade, Sue Kirkman representing Congressman Tom Petri, City of Adams Mayor Ken Romell, County Board Chairman George Kaldenberg, CWCAC Board of Directors President Dennis Gorder, Brian Schimming from the Wisconsin Division of Housing and Intergovernmental Relations, County Clerk Beverly Ward, and members of CWCAC. Along with other spectators, the Buckminster family who helped initiate the project was also present to participate in the ceremony.

Construction of the apartments began in March, 2001, and is expected to be completed in August.

-taken from the Adams County Times
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Robert Baldwin
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Serving Rock & Walworth Counties

AWARE PROGRAM
Community Giving

The brainchild of Evansville resident, Julie Hermanson, AWARE was created in 1998 with the help of Community Action, Inc. of Rock and Walworth counties to provide a safety net for local Evansville families in need. To ensure its goal, AWARE facilitated cooperative efforts between the school district, local government, and the community. AWARE encouraged and solicited community giving on a regular basis throughout the year through events, fund raisers, collections and drives. The agency’s first project was a Coats for Kids collection held during the first weeks of August 1998. A drop-off site was established, cleaners donated cleaning services and coats for all ages and sizes were distributed to area residents in October. This initial effort was followed by Diaper Days, food and clothing drives for the Community Care Closet, Love Light Tree, Toys for Evansville and much more.

The AWARE program and those volunteers began to realize there were many needs throughout the community that were still not being met. Since that time, AWARE has expanded its efforts of community support. Examples of this are the “League of Their Own” girls fast-pitch program, securing the donation of the Dean Community Center building, and spearheading a committee of youth and adults to determine programming. AWARE also assisted in finding a location for senior activities and a meal site. Though the City will hire a director for the center, AWARE will remain involved and provide assistance where needed.

AWARE’s newest project is working with local churches to find a new home for the Community Care Closet, a local food pantry and clothing center. AWARE will guide the committee as it researches other communities, food pantries and sources of emergency assistance for residents. AWARE’s Board of Directors is working to determine the level of ongoing local support that can be expected. An Evansville high school student and project volunteer stated, “Students enjoy the social aspects of being with friends to do projects, but most importantly the feeling of self-worth in knowing that they may have made someone’s day or life happier keeps them coming back for more.”

The Community Action Inc. AWARE program is an excellent example of an effective community collaboration that has improved the lives of the residents of Evansville. Community Action of Rock and Walworth Counties recognizes and applauds the initiative and efforts of Julie Hermanson and community volunteers who continue to look for ways to meet the needs of the residents of Evansville.

Julie Hermanson-AWARE (center) oversees the gift of the Dean Clinic building to the City of Evansville. Mayor Steve DiSalvo (left) receives the building key from Dr. Stephen Lewis.
In 1991 Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc. (CAC) opened the Dane County Free Clothing Center in an effort to solicit, collect and distribute donated new and used, seasonally appropriate clothing to low-income people. The Clothing Center has become an essential tool for many families as they struggle daily with the tough economic choices that are a reality when living in poverty. They use the Free Clothing Center as a critical means to help stretch their budget and maintain the well-being of their families. In 2000, the Free Clothing Center served 6,680 individuals.

The operation of the Clothing Center is unique and very cost effective. The Clothing Center receives donations of goods from individuals, groups, churches and businesses. Volunteer energy is used to sort and display the donated clothing. Volunteers include long-time active community members, individuals on the W-2 program working to develop job related skills, and individuals assigned by the courts to perform restitution.

In addition to clothing, the Center also provides gift packs to individuals and families coming out of shelters, as well as participants in CAC’s housing case management program who are dealing with homelessness. These individuals and families have lost most of their possessions and usually do not have enough money to purchase basic household items to reestablish housing. Items in the gift pack include sheets, blankets, pillows, towels, pots, pans, dishes, silverware etc. In 2000, 480 households received items through this program.

Another project of CAC’s Clothing Center is the Koats for Kids program conducted in partnership with Klinke Cleaners and WISC/TV3. Through this program, winter coats are collected from the community, cleaned by Klinke Cleaners and distributed to individuals in need. Community support for the Koats for Kids program has been overwhelming and thousands of families are served each year by this unique partnership between private individuals, businesses, and nonprofit organizations. In 2000, with promotional assistance from Channel 3, Koats for Kids provided 10,266 individuals with warm winter garments.
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HOME SERVICES AND HOME HEALTH PROGRAMS

There is no place like home. People have always felt this way, and through the services provided by Indianhead Home Health Care and Home Services, this dream is a reality for many residents of northwest Wisconsin.

Care is offered in seven counties served by three Community Action Agencies through a cooperative agreement with Northwest CSA and West Central CAA. Indianhead Community Action Agency contracts with Human Services Departments in Barron, Burnett, Douglas, Polk, Rusk, St. Croix and Washburn counties.

Personal care workers assist elderly and differently abled persons with activities of daily living, shopping, transportation, housekeeping, and socialization. Individuals may also pay privately for these services. The Home Services program provided 427,330 hours of service to 890 individuals and provided employment for 634 personal care workers in 2000.

The state licensed, Medicare/Medicaid certified, Home Health Care program was established to improve coordination and continuity of care for clients of the Home Services program when their care needs increased due to illness or hospitalization, or when assistance was needed to dispense medications to ensure they were taken correctly. For many clients, these services make it possible for them to remain in their own homes. The Home Health program served 122 clients in 2000.

Registered nurses, supervisory staff and office staff operate out of a local office in each county served to ensure quality and consistency of services. Local staffing varies depending on the caseload for each county. Administrative oversight and payroll billing are all handled out of Indianhead CAA's main office in Ladysmith.

The Home Services and Home Health Programs have made a significant impact on the quality of living for many residents in northwest Wisconsin and has proven to be an innovative and effective collaboration in improving delivery of services to the residents of Barron, Burnett, Douglas, Polk, Rusk, St. Croix and Washburn counties.
AT-RISK YOUTH PROGRAMS

Lakeshore CAP operates a number of programs for at-risk youth in Manitowoc and Door counties. Each program initiative targets a very specific population. All services are aimed at positively impacting youth to prevent or reduce juvenile delinquent behavior, to be accountable for their actions, and accept responsibility for taking corrective measures where appropriate.

Juvenile Restitution Program (JRP)
This program provides an opportunity to youth under court order, consent decree, or deferred prosecution agreements to complete restitution or community service as required. Emphasis is placed on development of appropriate job seeking skills, responsible behavior in community and work place, making restitution to victims, and completing community service.

Victim-Offender Mediation Program (VOMP)
A program of restorative justice, VOMP is based on the premise that youth need to be accountable for their actions, take responsibility for what they have done, and that meeting with their victim will help develop empathy for the victim and reduce the likelihood of further criminal acts.

Youth Mentoring Program (YMP)
An initiative developed through collaboration of a number of community agencies and persons, Youth Mentoring has been utilized with children who are unlikely to be served by Big Brother/Big Sisters programs because of their behavioral history.

Independent Living Skills (ILS)
A new program in FY2000, Lakeshore CAP is now working with youth aging out of foster care in Door County. Youth are assessed for their skill level, and prospects for living independently. Staff provide training through one-to-one discussions to assist the youth in developing economic independence, and a healthy lifestyle.

Family Mentoring Program (FMP)
A program designed to assist families of Children In Need of Protective Services (CHIPS) to understand the processes of the Social Services Department and the Court.

Electronic Monitoring Program (EMP)
One of the agencies more regimented youth services, EMP is designed to avert the need for placement in secure detention, and to permit local agencies and family to continue to work with delinquent youth in a home-based or foster care setting while at the same time protecting the community.

Intensive Supervision Program (ISP)
The most “severe” youth program, ISP is conducted by County staff under statutory language specific to that program, and Lakeshore CAP provides staff assistance in monitoring and correcting behaviors.

Each of these programs has grown from an identified need for juvenile delinquency prevention, intervention, and treatment not available through traditional providers. Most service needs addressed have been developed collaboratively with a number of other agencies and persons who have found that the service continuum has lacked alternatives or there have been gaps in addressing needs of youth.

Each service came about as the result of a needs analysis conducted with other organizations, public officials, and law enforcement. The court in particular has indicated that there has been a lack of alternatives available to them in working with the issues of youth, often times leaving them little opportunity to retain youth in the community where family members, community services, and counselors can continue to address the issues locally. An advantage in offering these services all under one roof has been that services are seamless, and knowledge of youth and family is retained as they move through the different service options available.
INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNTS
Community Collaboration

In April 2000, NEWCAP, Inc. teamed up with Integrated Community Services and UW Extension in Brown County to create a comprehensive IDA program. A proposal was submitted to the Brown County Department of Human Services requesting funding through Community Reinvestment Dollars to support the program. In June 2000, a contract was awarded with Brown County DHS. The contract allows each agency to develop a comprehensive IDA program.

Partnerships were developed with Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, Urban Hope, and Neighborhood Housing to provide specific aspects of training and counseling to participants. NWTC agreed to provide career counseling and follow-up, Urban Hope agreed to provide business and entrepreneurial programs, and Neighborhood Housing agreed to provide first-time home buyer information, guidance and advice. UW Extension was contacted to provide an extensive economic literacy program and individual budget counseling which includes credit repair and debt negotiation.

Potential program participants complete an individual independence plan with a case manager and attend the economic literacy program prior to enrollment. Working with M&I Bank, which serves as the account holder, NEWCAP and its partners have been able to offer group enrollment and free credit reports to each of the IDA participants. Individual budget counseling and training is required for at least 2 months.

The IDA Program has proved very challenging, but rewarding to NEWCAP. A total of 48 individuals have enrolled to date. Of the 48, 7 have already met their savings goals using the money to assist with the downpayment on a home. An additional 7 will be completing their savings plans within the next two months. Of these 3 will be using the money to assist with the purchase of a car to get to and from work, 2 will purchase a computer to assist with their educational goals, and 2 will use the money for a downpayment on a home. Of the individuals participating in the program 85% are female head of households, 83% work full-time, and nearly half have never worked with NEWCAP or its partners in the past.

This unique partnership has created a comprehensive program for low-income individuals and families to learn the value of saving, and building assets and skills to protect against future financial challenges.
Having hitched a ride to the Rib Mountain Travel Center, “M” became disoriented as he wandered in search of a route out of the area. A passerby noticed the man in obvious physical distress and chose to stop and transport him to the Wausau Hospital. After examination, it became apparent that the man had several medical problems that needed immediate attention including kidney failure, congestive heart failure, diabetes and failing eyesight. He was very ill and in desperate need of medical services.

The man was 59 years old and had been homeless for many years traveling the country. His diabetes had been neglected and he was slowly losing his eyesight and developing heart and kidney problems as a result. In his own words, he had expected for years that someday he would simply find a tree and sit at its base, watch his last sunset and die peacefully. He had no intention of bothering anyone and would simply travel, using whatever means available, until his final day came. Of course the passerby didn’t know his plan, and when they decided to transport “M” that day, they set in motion a chain of events that would drastically alter “M’s” life and bring to Wausau a new resident, who would soon find out that “Welcome Home” is not just a slogan.

As the hospital grew closer to discharge, the chaplain and hospital social service staff contacted North Central CAP to assist in finding their patient a home. North Central leases four apartments throughout their service area under a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Supportive Housing Program (SHP). SHP is unique in that it offers both the time and resources to thoroughly address problems and barriers confronting homeless clients. A client can live in SHP housing for up to 18 months with additional resources to address other problems the client may face. Luckily, a Bosnian refugee family had just found permanent housing, leaving one unit vacant.

Although “M” now had a place to stay there were still many other problems to consider including his health problems, need for medication, no health insurance coverage, lack of income, and no identification. But the Marathon County community came together in an extraordinary way to assist this man. The Marshfield Clinic assisted “M” with an application for payment assistance and provided necessary prescriptions until those resources were in place. The Jackson Street Pharmacy provided needed medical supplies until further assistance could be identified. Visiting Nurses came to “M’s” apartment to assist with daily care and medical treatment. The Salvation Army provided emergency food and prescription assistance until more long-term assistance could be secured. Wausau Medivan and the Community Assessment Support Service assisted with transportation for shopping and to and from medical appointments. Mobile Meals began serving “M” healthy meals immediately upon his release from the hospital. The Marshfield Clinic provided a much needed laser eye surgery to prevent “M” from completely losing his sight, and a nursing assistant volunteered to administer prescribed eye drops each morning. Staff from Social Services and the Job Center made home visits to assess eligibility for services. The Wausau Social Security Office provided mail and phone application assistance to expedite “M’s” SSI benefits. Target donated a microwave so that “M” could prepare meals more easily. The Church of Christ provided assistance to “M” in cleaning his apartment, doing laundry, preparing meals and shopping. North Central Technical College Student Disability Center provided training on how to live independently. The Council of the Blind, Library of Congress, and SHP provided materials and equipment that assist the blind in living independently. Each of these organizations were critical to the success “M” has experienced.

As of March 7, 2001, “M” is recuperating from heart bypass surgery. His eyesight continues to fail. He has been enrolled in the SHP program for slightly over seven months and still faces many obstacles, but has a community of friends solidly behind him. “M” would very much like to “give back” to Wausau, and is very thankful for all the help he has received.
Kinship Program
Pairing Kids and Adults to Form Lasting Bonds

"When I asked for a big brother I didn't think they would send me someone so old," Ryan Hastings told his mother, Dawn after meeting his mentor Mark Rooney. At the time Ryan was seven and Rooney was 46. "Then the challenge was on," said Rooney. The two began biking, walking, swimming and playing together once a week, with Rooney determined to keep the pace set by his young friend. They have been together ever since.

Ryan and Mark were paired through the Douglas County Kinship program which pairs children with adult mentors. When Dawn Hastings moved to Superior in 1992, she immediately signed Ryan up for the Kinship program. "He was surrounded by women," said Hastings, a single mother. "I wanted him to have a positive male role model." It took about a year to find the right match, but the results have been significant.

"We screen the mentors very carefully," said Kim Nygaard, director of the Douglas County Kinship program. "We try to match up a mentor and child with the same interests and similar personalities. We try to get a real close match so they can develop a relationship." This has certainly been the case with Ryan and Mark.

"I can't keep up with him anymore," said Rooney, now 52. When they go frogging in marshes these days, Rooney spots the frogs and Ryan catches them. When they bike or swim, Ryan races out in front. He taught Ryan how to play chess, and "now he beats me," said Rooney. Despite the age gap they are still together, and Mark is very much a part of Ryan's life. The two still get together once a week to snowshoe, go to the movies, build their own gadgets, play and talk.

"I got really lucky when I got matched up with him," said Rooney of his friend. "He's a real funny kid. He never fails to thank me. I was so much like him when I was a kid." "The nice thing is, I couldn't have picked a better role model and influence in Ryan's life," said Hastings.

"If you want to make a difference, be a mentor," said Nygaard. Relationships like this are what the Kinship program provides. The time and commitment for mentors can be as little as one hour a month, or as much as one hour a week. But that little amount of one-on-one time can make a big difference. For more information about the Kinship program contact Kim Nygaard at Northwest Community Service Agency at 715/392-5127.

-taken from The Daily Telegram/Maria Lockwood-Superior
GREAT AMERICAN BOOK DRIVE

The Racine/Kenosha Community Action Agency working in partnership with the Racine Unified School District, Gateway Technical College, Kenosha Unified School District, and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction distributed over 30,000 children’s books in Racine and Kenosha counties. The books were distributed to pre-kindergarten through third grade students in Title I elementary schools.

“The books, which were made available through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction via a James M. Flanigan Foundation grant, are part of a literacy encouragement project entitled the Great American Book Drive,” notes Julian Thomas, Gateway Technical College Racine Campus Provost.

“The project hopes to put books into the hands of all children enrolled in Title I schools, including preschool children.”

The books are from the Disney collection printed by Disney Press and Mouse Works, and include content suitable for various grade levels. The books carry a retail value ranging from $10 to $15 per book. Racine/Kenosha CAA Associate Director, Nancy Henry, noted the organization was pleased to be able to help with this effort because, “we believe in books, so let’s do it.”

The James Flanigan Foundation provides the grant to raise awareness of child literacy issues, and help instill in children the importance and wonder of reading. Flanigan is a former Chicago Bear football player who notes, “My life is rich, but it would not be nearly as rich without the worlds I have known, and things I have learned through reading. Reading and imagination go hand in hand, and imagination inspires hope, dreams, and determination.”

Carol Theesfel, Student Support Office and Project Coordinator for the Kenosha Unified School District notes, “I have dealt with children who have never held a book, and this is one of the most wonderful things that could happen for our children.”

WISCAP Annual Report 2001
Veterans Mobile Health Clinic

Thomas H. Wynn Sr., a veterans’ leader, hailed a “new era for veterans services” provided through a mobile health clinic, featuring medical services and benefits counseling for Milwaukee area veterans. Wynn, Director, Social Development Commission VETS Coordination Project, and President/CEO, Center for Veterans Issues, spoke at a recent ribbon cutting ceremony for the mobile clinic held at the Vet Center, 5401 N. 76th St. Wynn cited the mobile health clinic as an example of a “true collaboration” between federal, state, county, city and community-based organizations, the National Association for Black Veterans, and the Center for Veterans Issues, that will better serve the holistic needs of veterans and their families.

“I also want to thank Deborah Blanks, SDC Executive Director, “Wynn said. “It is through the SDC’s VETS Coordination Project and a myriad of other program services and resources that we have designed a truly integrated service system to meet the unmet needs of Milwaukee County veterans and their families. This additional service capability truly makes for a progressive, unique program.”

The Mobile Health Clinic will serve veterans with limited transportation and reduce waiting times for medical appointments by offering on-the-spot preventative and primary health care. Benefits counselors, from the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, the Center for Veterans Issues, SDC, and the National Association for Black Veterans, will help veterans and their families obtain state and federal benefits.

The clinic travels to a variety of sites throughout Milwaukee to insure access to services. For more information on upcoming clinic locations contact the Social Development Commission at 414/272-5600.
HUNTERS AGAINST HUNGER

A bountiful fall hunting season in southwest Wisconsin, the State of Wisconsin and very generous hunters filled the freezers at Southwest CAP’s food pantries. Through funding provided by the State of Wisconsin, local meat processors were able to process deer donated to area food pantries.

On November 1, the Iowa County Food Pantry received the first donation of 1,300 pounds of ground venison. Calls were made to local low-income residents and the distribution began. The mission of the program was to take surplus deer and donate the meat to the hungry. Families receiving meat were very appreciative even emotional.

The venison donation continued through November and December with a total of 9,002 pounds received and distributed through the Iowa County Food Pantry. Grant County pantries received about 3,000 pounds, with a total between the two counties of close to six tons of ground venison.

This “little” special project became somewhat overwhelming for the small pantries. On two different occasions a distribution was held in the parking lot at Southwest CAP. The freezer at the Commission on Aging was filled up twice as the meat was given out to area elderly. Recipients really appreciated this gift. In December a local church member contacted us when they were preparing Christmas food baskets and packages of the venison were even able to be included with this worthy project.

About 1,800 pounds of venison were utilized during the winter months to assist food pantry clients. This collaboration between Southwest CAP, the State of Wisconsin, local meat processors and area hunters was a huge success. Hunters were very generous and the recipients were thankful for the opportunity to have fresh meat for their tables.
Arlene Poulter has long dreamed of having her own dog kennel business. Her mother had owned a boarding kennel from the time Arlene was a small child, and she had helped her mother with the duties of running the kennel. She had extensive experience working with animals at the Humane Society and area veterinary clinics, and is currently the superintendent of the Barron County 4-H Dog Project. With the help of the West CAP Pleiades Project, Arlene was able to realize her dream of starting a business.

Arlene’s husband Terry had been laid off from work and the prospect of raising four children on Arlene’s salary alone looked grim. The family turned to West CAP for assistance in getting their new business off the ground and increasing their income. West CAP worked with Arlene for six months, preparing and refining her business plan, exploring marketing ideas, determining cash flow and preparing financial statements. West CAP also helped Arlene determine what type of bookkeeping system would work well for her.

When the business plan was completed, Arlene applied for and received a microloan to start her business. Staff continue to stay in touch to troubleshoot potential problems within the business and other support and assistance to ensure the long-term success of the business.

The Bur Rock Boarding Kennel opened in March and has already received interest from the community. Arlene’s first boarder was a cat named Sabrina, who seemed to be quite pleased with her stay. A grand opening is planned for May 2001 and the event is expected to generate more referrals and business for the kennel. Arlene has worked closely with area veterinarians and the Rice Lake Chronotype, the local newspaper, to help generate interest and business.

The West CAP Pleiades Project works with clients to ensure success through careful planning, needs analysis, marketing, financial management, and budgeting and business training. Arlene and her family are projecting a 36% increase in their income due to revenues from Bur Rock Kennel in the first year, and 43% in year two. In the last year the Pleiades Project has assisted in the development of 16 new businesses and 21 jobs within their service area.
RETIRE AND SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (RSVP)

When the volunteers from the Mt. Washington Senior Residence had to cancel one of their weekly reading sessions with students at the Sherman School in Eau Claire, neither party was very happy. You see, since 1994, Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council's Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) has recruited volunteers from Mt. Washington and residents have come every week to spend time with 4th grade children at Sherman.

Mary Luhman, Learning Disabilities Teacher at Sherman School says, "This gives the kids something to look forward to on Mondays. They get so excited when they see the bus show up at the front doors." But the relationship is a two-way street. Ginger Bluem, Activity Specialist at Mt. Washington feels the RSVP volunteers look forward to reading on Mondays as much as the kids. She says that they are disappointed when they have to cancel during treacherous winter weather. The volunteers have been known to say, "What’s a little ice?"

Reading with the children shows extremely positive results, for both the students and volunteers. Students learn that reading is fun, improve their self image from the positive feedback and approval from volunteers, enhance reading skills and overall academic skills, improve attitude toward learning, learn communication skills and how to make friends, and share in diverse learning. The volunteers benefit as well, by forming lasting friendships with children who have just as much to teach.

With the emergence of things like the internet and television, reading is something that may end up taking a back burner. Reading time is bonding time, time to share a great adventure with a young person in our lives. Whether it is June B. Jones or Happy Birthday Danny & the Dinosaur, the RSVP Mt. Washington volunteers would agree they get just as much out the time as the students do.

In the past year, 700 volunteers have donated 73,000 hours at 97 local agencies throughout Buffalo, Eau Claire, Jackson, and Trempealeau counties. RSVP volunteers continue to share their lifetime experiences with others.
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MLK NONVIOLENCE PROJECT
MLK Teach-In

Over 460 area youth participated in the MLK Teach-In on January 8, 2001. The MLK Day Teach-In is a program that has been developed through the Martin Luther King Nonviolence Project at the Coulee Region CAP. The focus of the Teach-In is to educate 6th to 8th grad youth about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Kingian Nonviolence, and modern day peace heroes. The 6th Annual Teach-In took place at the Cartwright Center at UW-La Crosse.

The MLK Day Teach-In began with a member of True Virtu Productions singing the African American National Anthem “Lift Every Voice”. HealthWorks Theatre Productions then followed with a 40 minute play called “Silence.Com”. The play discussed issues of internal and external violence, particularly focusing on the issues of not fitting in, drug abuse, date rape, gang violence, and body image.

The last activity of the morning was a viewing of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speech, “I Have a Dream”. “It told you a lot about the violence that happens and how to open up about the things that happen to you,” said Carina Brudfman, a 14-year-old at Sparta Middle School.

Following the morning activities, all of the participants broke into small groups and discussed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the civil rights movement, and nonviolence. The small groups also discussed modern day peace heroes such as Howard Zinn, Eleanor Roosevelt, Kofi Annan, and Rosa Parks. After the discussions, two participants from every group presented information to the large group about their peace hero and how that hero was fulfilling Dr. King’s dream.

Students from Sparta, Aquinas, Lincoln, Logan & Longfellow Middle Schools and Project Prevent were all at the Teach-In, representing Monroe, Vernon, and La Crosse counties. La Crosse Mayor John Medinger also participated in the Teach-In as a facilitator, for the third year in a row.

Coulee CAP staff, Katie Van Roosenbeek (Community Services Specialist), Jessica Th (Youth Services Specialist), and Bryan Schachtel (Coulee CAP Intern), were involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the MLK Day events. Coulee CAP also partnered with Y.E.S. Americorps to help plan and implement the Teach-In. None of this could have been accomplished without the help of over 80 community volunteers who facilitated the small group break out sessions, and the donation of space at the Cartwright Center from UW-La Crosse.

For more information about the Martin Luther King, Jr. Nonviolence Project, contact Katie Van Roosenbeek at 608/796-9067 or via email at katiev@couleecap.org.

Martin Luther King Jr.
The Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups successfully raised over $1 million in 2000 for the construction of new headquarters in southeast Madison. CWAG’s Intergenerational Center was completed in February 2000 and dedicated in April 2000.

CWAG is a statewide non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization representing and serving older people throughout the state. With a membership of over 600 organizations representing 125,000 individuals statewide, CWAG speaks out on behalf and at the direction of older people who govern the organization.

CWAG’s missions are to advocate for the special needs of older persons, to assure that older persons are recognized as people of dignity and worth, and to affirm that older people are partners in building the Wisconsin of tomorrow for people of all ages. The Intergenerational Center provides both a facility and an atmosphere where people of all ages can work together to bring about legal and legislative changes of concern to Wisconsin citizens.

Former Governor Tommy Thompson called the Center “a place to bring the generations together.” Executive Director Tom Frazier said the Center was envisioned as an internationally recognized, intergenerational think-tank.

The 14,000 square foot Intergenerational Center houses CWAG staff, including the acclaimed Elder Law Center, and also provides office facilities for the AgeAdvantAge Area Agency on Aging and the American Heart Association.

The Intergenerational Center has three meeting rooms (the Ameritech Training Center) that are available to non-profit groups for a nominal fee. The rooms can be combined to form one large room or one larger room plus one small room. State-of-the-art audio-visual equipment is available. Non-profit organizations may reserve one or more of the rooms for trainings, conferences, retreats, forums and other events by calling (608) 224-0606.

The Intergenerational Center was built through the efforts of a capitol fundraising campaign. More than two-thirds of the estimated $1.5 million cost has been raised to date. A grassroots campaign among individual members has raised nearly $110,000, while corporate donations have exceeded $600,000. Madison entrepreneur William T. Graham generously donated the land, valued at $231,000, on which the Center is located.
The Foundation for Rural Housing, Inc. (FRHI) has for over 30 years assisted very low-income persons statewide. Over the years, FRHI has assisted thousands of households in acquiring and maintaining adequate, safe and sanitary housing. FRHI has provided training, technical assistance, demonstrations, and information to hundreds of communities and agencies. FRHI has generated millions of dollars in housing improvements. We continually support local efforts, Community Action Agencies, and work to address gaps within our statewide network.

For over 70,000 low-income residents in Wisconsin living in a manufactured home, it is their castle. For most governmental programs, because “mobile homes” are considered personal property not real estate, owners are not eligible for similar services as other home owners. Rural Housing receives numerous calls each week from persons needing repairs on their manufactured homes. This is a gap not often filled by other programs. Rural Housing applied and received funds from Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) specifically for seniors and persons with disabilities living in manufactured homes.

These funds have been used for a door, railing, steps, plumbing, skirting, flooring and other much needed repairs. One particular example of how these funds are used was to assist an 86 year young woman whose home is in a community park in Rhinelander. With $600 and 82 labor hours provided by three volunteers, the ceiling in the living room and kitchen was replaced. This included work on the roof structure, new insulation, and a vapor barrier. Now she can sit confidently in her home knowing that the ceiling will not fall on her.

This and other fairly low-cost repairs offered with the assistance of community volunteers enable many seniors and differently-abled persons to remain in their homes and maintain their independence. FRHI is proud to be able to provide this needed service in communities across Wisconsin, and continues to work hard to ensure that low-income individuals and families have access to safe, affordable housing.
United Migrant Opportunity Services

STARTFRESH

Low-income families, and children in particular, benefit when both parents are working at living-wage jobs and participating in their children’s emotional development. The StartFresh program focuses on residents of Southeast Milwaukee County, though UMOS can serve individuals from anywhere in the county. UMOS has developed a multi-lingual, culturally sensitive model that builds on each participant’s norms regarding parenting and child-rearing.

FreshStart Job Coaches offer intensive services to non-custodial fathers during a one-year period. Program goals include preparing participants for good-paying work and strengthening their family ties. Small caseloads of approximately 15 participants to one Job Coach ensure quality service delivery.

A consortium of four South Side agencies including Journey House, La Causa, SER-Jobs for Progress, and the United Community Center, have joined with UMOS to provide Job Coaching services. UMOS also partners with Esperanza Unida, Lao Family Community Center, and MATC to offer education and training opportunities to StartFresh participants.

StartFresh has a “work first” emphasis. Unemployed or underemployed participants find work quickly and then pursue educational or occupational skills classes in their free time. As participants’ competencies grow, Job Coaches find them permanent employment for a sustainable wage and good benefits package. StartFresh participants receive assistance with:

- Job readiness, such as résumé preparation and interviewing skills
- Parenting/life skills abilities
- Personal budgeting
- Life planning and motivation
- Removal of physical, mental health and substance abuse barriers
- Basic education in such areas as GED, English as a Second Language, and literacy
- Specialized training for in-demand jobs
- Mentoring, advocacy and support from job coaches
- Establishment of regular child support payments

StartFresh is primarily for men who do not have custody of their children. To qualify, the child’s custodial parent, usually the mother, must be receiving W-2 cash benefits or financial assistance with childcare. The majority of non-custodial fathers in the program have families with 30 months or more of welfare dependence. Participants often possess multiple barriers to employment including: substance abuse issues; poor work history; learning disabilities; criminal history; limited English proficiency; and insufficient math and reading skills.

UMOS also provides several other programs designed to assist men in reconnecting with their children and finding gainful employment including the State Department of Corrections Project NOW which assists criminal offenders; and the Children First Program which assists non-custodial parents who come in contact with Family Court Commissioners.

WISCAP Annual Report 2001
COMMUNITY ACTION BENEFITS WISCONSIN

- CAAs served over 500,000 Wisconsin residents in 1999.
- CAAs serve as leaders in the area of advocacy and system change.
- CAAs leveraged more than $110 million in federal funding and $18 million in local and private donations that benefited Wisconsin communities.
- CAAs provide services and coordinate community resources.
- CAAs are resources in their local areas for community planning and development, coalition building, and resource mobilization.
- CAAs assist hundreds of individuals and families in Wisconsin to move out of poverty.

WHO COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES SERVE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETHNICITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
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<tr>
<td>0-17</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<td>18-44</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<td>45-69</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>6%</td>
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Information provided by the Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services and NASCSP (1999).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION (age 25+)</th>
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<tr>
<td>0-8</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>HS/GED</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>12+</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2yr/4yr</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100% or less</td>
<td>59%</td>
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<tr>
<td>($17,650 family of 4)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>150% or less</td>
<td>98%</td>
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<tr>
<td>($26,475 family of 4)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>FAMILY TYPE w/children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two-Parent</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Parent</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEALTH INSURANCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18%</td>
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</table>
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www.wiscap.org
WISCONSIN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

WISCAP Member Agencies

ADVOCAP, Inc.
CAP Services, Inc.
Central Wisconsin CAC
Community Action, Inc.
Community Action Coalition
Indianhead CAA
Lakeshore CAP
NEWCAP
North Central CAP
Northwest CSA

Racine/Kenosha CAA
Social Development Commission (SDC)
Southwest CAP
West Central CAA
Western Dairyland EOC
Wisconsin Coulee Region CAP
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups
Foundation for Rural Housing
United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS)