



**West Central Missouri  
Community Action Agency**

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Helping People... Changing Lives



**West Central Missouri Community Action Agency  
Calendar of Events**

April—Child Abuse Awareness Month

May—Community Action Month

June—Volunteer Appreciation

Missourians to End Poverty meets the *Fourth Wednesday of each month*. For more information, please visit [www.communityaction.org](http://www.communityaction.org).

WCMCAA Governing Board Meetings are held the *Fourth Thursday of each month*.

WCMCAA Featured on 95.3 KDKD Speak Out - *Second Monday of each Month*.

Community Empowerment Meetings in each of the nine county service area are held monthly.

WCMCAA Head Start Centers hold monthly Family Enrichment events.

Please see the WCMCAA calendar of events on our website for more information regarding these and other WCMCAA activities. [www.wcmcaa.org](http://www.wcmcaa.org)

**IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW, WOULD LIKE TO BE ADDED TO THE WCMCAA NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST OR E-LIST, PLEASE CONTACT JAMIE OBERLY, COMMUNITY SERVICES COORDINATOR, PHONE: 660-476-2185 OR E-MAIL [JOBERLY@WCMCAA.ORG](mailto:JOBERLY@WCMCAA.ORG)**

WCMCAA is a member of the National Community Action Partnership and Missouri Association for Community Action.

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**OUR MISSION**

**W**est Central Missouri Community Action Agency is dedicated to empowering people to make a positive change by coordinating and administering resources.

**W**est Central Missouri Community Action Agency strives to be the voice in our communities and our governments for those most in need.

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WCMCAA

SPRING 2014

# Community Action Works!

## 50 Years After Launching the War on Poverty: We Can Cut Poverty Again

provided by Missouri Association of Community Actions via Letter to the Editor

50 years ago, President Lyndon B. Johnson used his State of the Union address to call on our nation to launch an "unconditional war on poverty," a national commitment which resulted in programs like Medicare, Medicaid, Head Start, Pell Grants, expansions to Social Security and nutrition assistance. Some policymakers have claimed we lost this war, as our nation today still struggles with 46.5 million people under the federal poverty line, about \$23,500 for a family of four. In Missouri, over 947,000 individuals struggle with poverty and over 300,000 of those are children.

In Missouri, a Community Action Network was created in the 1960s-1970s to help people reach self sufficiency by providing emergency services to stabilize families and by mobilizing communities to come together to fight poverty. Our network consists of 19 Community Action Agencies, which provide early childhood education, job training, life skills classes, health services, energy assistance, housing assistance, and dozens of local initiatives to meet the unique needs within

communities. The Community Action Network wants you to know that the war on poverty **hasn't failed**. In fact, a new study from Columbia University shows that when safety net programs are taken into account it actually helped our nation reduce poverty from a rate of 26% in 1967 (shortly after President Johnson's announcement) to 16% in 2012.

One of the biggest differences between then and now is the structure of our economy. In the decades after World War II, the gains of our economic growth were shared by most Americans. For those who still struggled, a safety net of programs was there to support them until they could get back on their feet. Starting in the 1970s, long-term changes in the economy reduced manufacturing jobs, weakened unions, and reduced investment in skills training. This has contributed to widening inequality and increased poverty. Today, we face some of the highest rates of income inequality since the 1920's and too many sectors of employment with stagnant wages that don't

pay enough for families to make ends meet. In the 1960's, we proved that as a nation that we can cut poverty dramatically, so we know we can do it again. In fact, in the 10 years following President Johnson's declaration, the poverty rate fell by 42%, reaching an historic low of 11.1%. As President Johnson called us to action 50 years ago, it's time to recommit to cutting poverty again.



It's time to reset the conversation. Instead of partisan politics or "business as usual" politics, we need a new investment agenda that will grow our economy in a way that works for everyone, not just those at the very top. We need to engage in meaningful compromises that increase access for everyone to have quality education at all age levels and affordable health care. Ultimately, we need to dedicate our state's resources to ensure that all Missourians have the opportunity to thrive.

### Good Luck Billie Williams

Email from Billie Williams



I hope that many of you that work for West Central receive this email.

I want to personally thank all of West Central Employees in all area for allowing me to get to know you. I have been

blessed and given the opportunity to be a part of the Head Start family and little did I know how many people that work for West Central, but in another unit would play a major role in my life.

I couldn't possibly list all the people that have helped me to become the person I am today that work for West Central, but let me tell you I wouldn't be the person I am without each and everyone of you. From administration, to housing, to outreach, to data, to those of us all who are working side by side with families each and

every day I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

It is my time as some of you know for me to move on to the public school so that I can finish my student teaching and receive my Bachelor's degree. Thank you my personal friends who have supported me the whole way. I was a Head Start parent and from there I have grown leaps and bounds because my family, co-workers, supervisors, mentors, and bosses believed in me. I have never in my life worked with such a dedicated group as West Central.

I believe wholeheartedly in what Head Start stands for and what they achieve with children and especially families. I struggled for quite awhile with the fact that I would have to resign in order to receive my degree, but have now come to terms with the fact that I now have a new goal to accomplish. My new goal is to bring what I

learned from Head Start - that the parent must be a partner in the educational growth of the child - and hopefully spread that truth on with the schools and families that I hope to continue to work with in the public school.

For any Head Start new employee I give this advice - break out of your shell. Meet the other staff in other centers, in other areas under the West Central umbrella. West Central has a great community of people in staff members alone and I am so glad that I too have been a part of this organization. Thank you all again for allowing me to be a part of your lives if even for a short moment. My hope is to continue to work with you in however my new journey allows.

My best to you all and hope to talk to you soon,  
Billie Williams

### The Promise

“Community Action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live.

We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.”

COMMUNITY ACTION WORKS!

### We get Thank You Letters...

By Jamie Oberly, Community Services Coordinator

West Central Missouri Community Action Agency's Community Services Department assists many households, people and families with the Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) and Energy Crisis Program (ECIP) throughout the year. Often times, people are overwhelmed and in crisis situations they have never had to experience before. WCMCAA staff help people by changing lives on a daily basis. WCMCAA's mission in part is to empower people to make positive changes. The thankfulness from these empowered people with positive changes is reflected in

the Thank You Letters we receive from many of the people we serve The following is an excerpt of just one of these thankful notes...

Thank you for your kindness...

To Let you know I really have appreciated help through (this) long hard, cold, winter.

Thank You!



To let you know I really have appreciated help through (this) long hard, cold, winter. Thank You Sincerely



The WCMCAA Housing Unit provides opportunities for low-income persons to have decent, safe and sanitary housing. Over 3,000 lives in nearly 1700 households are touched by the comprehensive housing programs operated by the Housing United every day. Our services include: Housing Choice Voucher Program: Nearly 1,300 households are provided the opportunity to live in a decent safe and sanitary housing of their choice by receiving Housing Choice Voucher subsidies through this program in eight rural counties as well as the metro county of Cass and the City of Grandview, Missouri. Family Self-Sufficiency and Home

### WCMCAA's Housing Programs

Ownership Programs: These programs are offered in conjunction with the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Over 150 families are participating in the Family Self-Sufficiency Program and many have graduated and become self-sufficient. A number of families have been able to become home owners by taking advantage of the Home Ownership Program, which helps the families pay their mortgage rather than rent. Multifamily Housing: The agency has developed and manages 399 units of multifamily housing in eleven properties in Cass County, Jackson County, Henry County and several other rural counties. Over 80% of the units are senior housing and 12 are for people with special needs. WCMCAA is also a partner in three other multifamily developments with a total of 72 units.

Housing Counseling: WCMCAA is a HUD (Housing and Urban Development) approved Housing Counseling Agency. Through this program counseling services are provided in the following areas: pre and post-rental, pre-purchase, post-purchase, mortgage default, spending plan and budgeting, foreclosure prevention, credit counseling, one-on-one or group counseling.

**LOCATIONS**  
For more information regarding the Housing Choice Voucher Program, Family Self-Sufficiency and Home Ownership Programs, and Housing Counseling Services, please contact : **(800) 293 -3581**  
For information regarding Multifamily Housing, please contact staff at one of the units listed below.

“The agency has developed and manages 300 units of multifamily housing in 11 properties...”

### Multifamily Housing

#### BENTON COUNTY

\*Oaktree Villa  
919 Walnut Drive #C-2  
Warsaw, Missouri 65355  
(660) 438-5007

#### CASS COUNTY

\*Greenleaf Estates  
16805 Spring Valley Road  
Belton, Missouri 64012  
(816) 331-4620

\*Hawthorn Estates  
1900 Jenkins Drive  
Harrisonville, Missouri 64701  
(816) 380-6833

\*Walnut Estates  
412 West Walnut  
Raymore, Missouri 64083  
(816) 331-2959

#### CEDAR COUNTY

\*Maplewood Estates  
1119 South Maplewood Place  
Stockton, Missouri 65785  
(417) 276-3330

Cedar Ridge  
1201 E. Patricia  
Eldorado Springs, MO 64744  
(417) 876-6114

#### HENRY COUNTY

Antioch Hills  
1819 North Gaines Drive  
Clinton, Missouri 64735  
(660) 885-8200

#### HICKORY COUNTY

\*Hickory Estates  
701 West Highway 54  
Hermitage, Missouri 65668  
(417) 745-0131

#### JACKSON COUNTY

\*Prairie Estates  
1515 Jones Avenue  
Grandview, Missouri 64030  
(816) 767-1445

\*Willow Estates  
4800 South Hocker  
Kansas City, Missouri 64136  
(816) 350-3134

#### ST. CLAIR COUNTY

\*Appleton Estates  
300 South Beech  
Appleton City, Missouri 64724  
(660) 476-2185  
ext. 1306

\*Senior Housing Units



## Connie's Gardening Success at Prairie Estates ~ WCMCAA's Senior Housing

By Kathy Hendrix, Service Coordinator at Prairie Estates, a WCMCAA low-income senior housing complex



Connie Nikkel, Resident of Prairie Estates

"Connie, we are glad to have you at Prairie Estates, and congratulate you on a job well done in the garden." Kathy Hendrix, Service Coordinator of Prairie Estates



For More Information, about WCMCAA's Programs and Eligibility, Visit Our Website [www.wcmcaa.org](http://www.wcmcaa.org)

**Family Structure:** Connie lives alone in senior apartment housing.

**What Living Situation prompted a visit to WCMCAA?:**

Connie moved from out of state to Grandview to be near family and to take classes through a local church organization. She went on-line and discovered Prairie Estates' through WCMCAA's website.

**Steps taken by WCMCAA Staff to improve situations:**

Connie became acquainted with the Service Coordinator at Prairie Estates in 2011 when she first moved in, and was introduced to energy assistance and other service programs. But what really piqued her attention was when she was told about the Community Garden at the complex. Residents at Prairie Estates are offered the opportunity to have their own small plot in the complex's garden for growing vegetables. In partnership with Kansas City Community Gardens,

a non-profit organization that helps low income groups start a community garden, Prairie Estates offers residents seeds, plants, and fertilizer at a very low cost, as well as having access to expert advice for plant problems from KCCG's staff. Over the past 5 years, several residents have participated in the garden.

Being a vegetarian, Connie was excited about the idea of growing her own food organically. Even though she had never gardened before, Connie signed up for a plot, and her gardening addiction began!

**Steps taken to Overcome Issues and or Setbacks:**

Being a newcomer to gardening, Connie initially had lots of questions. The Service Coordinator, the facilitator of the Community Garden, held regular garden meetings to teach beginners how to prepare the soil, plant, fertilize, and keep insects under control without harmful pesticides. Connie listened, took notes, had a few trials and errors, and

soon became a bona fide gardener. Plants she has grown include Swiss chard, spinach, kale and lettuce for her daily "green smoothies", peppers, squash, a variety of heirloom tomatoes and her favorite— stevia, a natural sweetener.

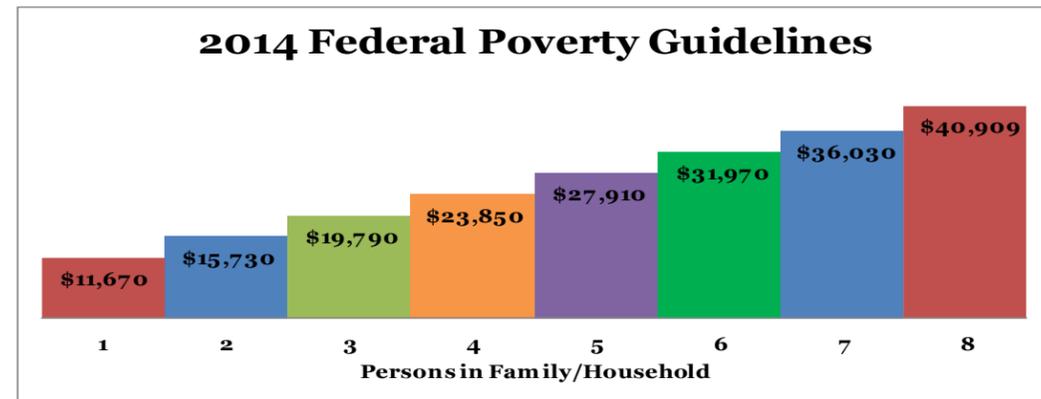
**Qualities that make them successful:**

Connie has been an inspiration to others, not only in her disciplined approach to health, but in her commitment to her garden plot. Even in hot summer months, she has done an exemplary job at keeping her plot weeded. A visitor to the garden would be delighted to see her artistic touches---a hanging basket of pansies and a lawn chair for enjoying nature in peaceful solitude. Connie has a strong faith and is an encourager to others.

**Future Goals:**

Connie's goal as she continues to garden is to begin composting for better soil preparation.

### Federal Poverty Guidelines Released in January, 2014



## Congratulations Debi

By Cathy Adams, Community Services Specialist of Cass County

You would never know it through her positive and cheerful attitude, but Debi has endured more hardships in the past 5 years than the rest of us will endure in a lifetime. Faced with life-threatening health issues and unhealthy home living conditions that few of us could imagine, she faced huge obstacles. While there have been other adverse situations that have come her way, Debi chooses not to dwell on the negatives. On the contrary, she has chosen to focus on what she can change and not on what she can't. Through her daughter's encouragement to reach out, Debi came to us not expecting any handouts, but rather looking for positive ways to improve her life through the programs WCMCAA had to

offer. She has not only been able to secure safe and affordable housing on the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, but also received help paying utility bills through the Energy Assistance program, and offered monthly food pantry assistance in our Belton office. By attending our Life Skills class she has learned how to cook healthier and budget her food dollars. She also received help with school supplies at our annual Back to School Fair in August, and was provided a wonderful turkey dinner meal at Thanksgiving. During the Christmas season her son was given a gift he might not otherwise had received through our partnership with Operation Santa.

Debi says coming into our



Debi Weekley

office feels like her safe haven where she can find a friend and also a caring ear to listen. Her future for her and her son looks brighter and she now has confidence in seeing her son graduate from High School and the hope of him attending a good college. Participating in programs offered by WCMCAA not only gave her the information, but more importantly the tools she needed to succeed and be an overcomer. Congratulations Debi!

## Penny's Success Story

By Debbie McCollom, Community Services Specialist of Morgan County

**What Living Situation prompted a visit to WCMCAA?:**

Penny has been with West Central and was a long term client that we helped and stayed with assisting her until she was totally self-sufficient. She has had in the past issues that every one of us deals with every day. Learning to cope and move forward was her goal.

**WCMCAA Programs Utilized on Journey:**

Family Support, Life Skills, Energy Assistance, ECIP, Salvation Army, Dollar More, HUD, Weatherization, Food Pantry, Budgeting

**Steps taken by WCMCAA Staff to improve situations:**

Penny has had setbacks over the time we helped her. We have taken each issue as it arises and

worked with them using our programs or a referral if needed. Setting goals and letting her tell us in which ways she would like to solve them. Then we gave her the tools to move forward.

**How the person's life improved as a result of WCMCAA program involvement:**

Awesome, So proud of her! She is now the manager of her job, has her own home and does not rent anymore. She is the owner of a second house and rents it out to someone else. She has a savings account, has gotten new appliances, got different vehicle and her children grown. Some things may seem small but every goals was a life changing step. Over the period of time we helped Penny many goals have been reached that we can list, but the most important goal I have seen is her strong determination

to continue and share with others in need. She has shown her children what it is to succeed with her goals. Most of all Penny says West Central has taught her to be self-sufficient. And she is, Penny has not needed any of our programs now; but she knows that if she needs to work through something, she can come back and we will give her the tools to work out new goals.

**Future Goals:**

Continue her life as she now has with her job and continue to be a Manager, Landlord, Mom and not a client. Her goals is to stay self-sufficient. AND according to Penny go back to Hawaii. She got to go there one time and now she wants to go again.

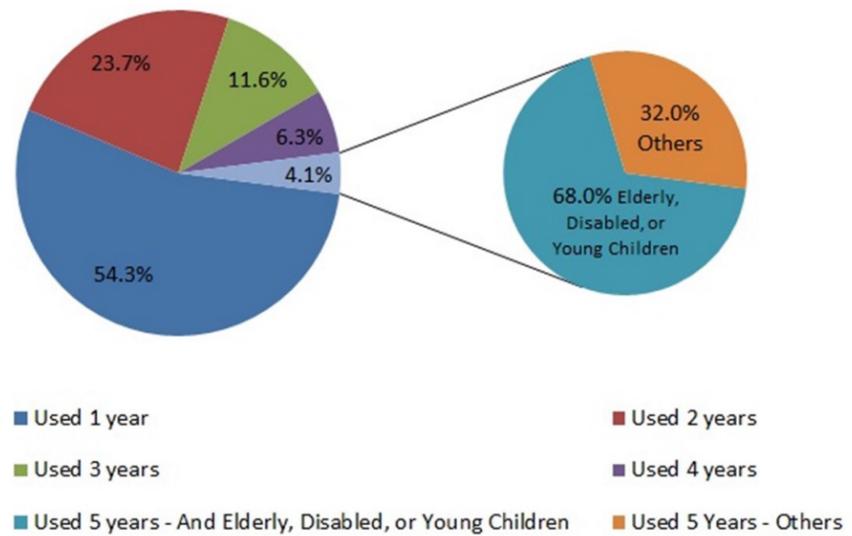
Most of all Penny says "West Central has taught her to be self-sufficient." And she is!

## WCMCAA's Facts for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) & Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP)

### 5 Year Usage by Recipient Households: FFY2009—FFY2013

By LIHEAP provider—as recorded in Missouri's Management Information System (MIS)

In the 5 year period FFY09 through FFY13, **8,525** unique households accessed ECIP Crisis assistance through WCMCAA in at least one of the five years. The pie chart below shows the percent of those households that accessed ECIP services by the number of years in which they did so.



Of the **8,525** households included in this data, the vast majority (**78.0%**) accessed the program for short term situations, having received benefits in only one or two of the past 5 years. Over half of all households, (**54.3%**), accessed the program in only one of the 5 years.

Only **4.1%** of households received ECIP funds every year.

Of that 4.1% accessing the program annually over two thirds, (**68.0%**) were classified as Vulnerable. These are households with individuals who are either elderly, disabled, or young children, (5 or younger.) Over half of those, (**51.1%**) included disabled individuals.

**“Only 4.1% of household received ECIP funds every year. Of this 4.1%, 68% of the households were elderly, disabled or had children age 5 or younger”**

### LIHEAP Fact Sheet

Source Office of Community Services (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/resource/liheap-fact-sheet-for-fy-2014>)

**The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** is a federal program established in 1981 and funded annually by Congress. These federal dollars are released directly to states, territories, tribes and the District of Columbia who use the funds to provide energy assistance to low-income households. LIHEAP offers financial assistance to qualifying low-income households to help them pay their home heating or cooling bills. Under federal law, a household must have income below

either 150 percent of the federal poverty level or 60 percent of state median income level, whichever is higher. However, states can set lower income thresholds if they choose to. Some states use non-federal funds to expand their programs to include more households or to provide higher benefits. LIHEAP provides important help to families struggling to make ends meet. LIHEAP assistance can help a household avoid having its utilities shut off or help

reestablish service after a disruption. LIHEAP also can help pay ongoing heating and cooling costs, assisting families who may have a hard time paying utility bills and meeting other basic household expenses such as food, prescriptions, rent, or child care. In addition, LIHEAP helps some households by weatherizing their homes, making them more energy efficient.



## Need help paying your energy bills?



### Get relief from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)



#### What help can I get?

LIHEAP can help you:

1. Pay your main heating & cooling bills
2. Get EMERGENCY SERVICES

#### Who can get help?

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps low income people meet their immediate energy needs. It can mainly help those who spend a large amount of their household income on energy bills.

#### To qualify for LIHEAP assistance, you must meet each of these requirements:

1. Be the person responsible for paying home heating and cooling costs
2. Be a United States citizen or have been legally admitted for permanent residence
3. Have \$3,000 or less in bank accounts, retirement accounts, or investments
4. Meet specific income guidelines that vary according to household size

#### How does it work?

If you qualify for LIHEAP, you will get help through a program called Energy Assistance. Energy Assistance will give you a one-time payment to help pay your main fuel heating bill during the months of October-March. The amount of help you receive is based on the size of your household, your household income, and the type of heating fuel used in your home.

If you qualify for Energy Assistance, you may also qualify for additional help through the Emergency Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP). The Emergency Crisis Intervention Program can help you pay your fuel bill when your energy is shut off or is threatened to be shut off. The amount of help you receive is based on the amount of money needed to settle your crisis with the energy provider.

#### How do I apply?

Get an application by calling: 660-476-2185 or Download and print an application at [www.wcmcaa.org](http://www.wcmcaa.org)

#### Application checklist:

- Answer all questions completely
- Sign and date application
- Include your main fuel bill
- Include income records for members not receiving food stamps
- If your account is in disconnect status, include shut off notice
- If you are not currently getting public assistance, include copies of Social Security cards

**Do you have questions?** Call us at 660-476-2185 Or visit our Website: [www.wcmcaa.org](http://www.wcmcaa.org)

