

# HEROES OF WEST CENTRAL MISSOURI





West Central Community Action Agency was incorporated on July 19, 1965 as a private nonprofit organization. The Agency's purpose is to function as a Community Action Agency designated through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

*Illustrations by Bailey Hoffman*

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Use the camera app on your smartphone to  
find our website and social media pages!





## FROM THE CEO AND PRESIDENT

We have too many villains in the world today. Too many enemies; too many of the “other;” too many viruses and variants; and too much violence, and despair, whether social or economic. Our news tells us too often about bad people, bad events, and bad outcomes; and tends to focus on the big, the bold; the famous and infamous.

Our news does not tell us enough about the good, the everyday, folks next door. Nor does it tell us about the fact that most of the folks next door are not villains, rather, they are good people doing good, honest work to provide for their families and to make their communities better places to live for everyone.

This annual report is dedicated to our great, staff members here at our Agency that are our Agency’s super-heroes of this, and every other, day.

They have used their tremendous talents to do exceptional work serving wonderful people, in what have been extremely difficult times. This report and its superheroes theme is dedicated, also, to the nurses, doctors, teachers, community service workers, food service and other front-line retail workers, first responders, daycare providers, utility providers, parents and grandparents, business owners, transportation and manufacturing workers, government workers, elected officials, and the many others who came together to defend our communities, our neighbors, our friends, our loved ones, and the most vulnerable among us, from a particularly vile villain -- COVID.

To our staff, thank you for your dedication and devotion to the service of others, and for the exceptional way in which you serve.

To our Board, thank you for your commitment to the mission and purpose of this organization, and for your steady, excellent and consistent leadership through tough times.

To our clients, thank you for the opportunity to know you, to learn from you, and to work with you.

To our partners, thank you for your example and for the standard you set for serving the community.

To the communities in the West Central region, thank you for supporting us, and for allowing us to call this beautiful region filled with beautiful people home.

**SUPERHEROES, EACH AND EVERY ONE.**

***-CHRIS THOMPSON***

# ABOUT US

In July of 1965, West Central Missouri Rural Development Corporation was designated by the Office of Economic Opportunity as a Community Action Agency (CAA) pursuant to enactment of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

In 1990, the decision was made by the Board of Directors to change the agency's name from West Central Missouri Rural Development Corporation to include the Community Action designation to more closely identify with the state and national Community Action image and goals. Today, the Agency is known as West Central Missouri Community Action Agency.

West Central's success begins and ends with our employees. Under the direction of the Board of Directors, the President and Chief Executive Officer is responsible for hiring and assigning staff to conduct the daily operations of the Agency. In order to provide the most effective and efficient services in the communities we serve, West Central employs roughly 100 staff within the six unit organizational structure.

In Missouri, there are 19 community action agencies across the state. Each agency serves low-income individuals and families through a variety of direct services to help them achieve self-sufficiency. West Central is one of those agencies.



# NEW YEAR, NEW LOGO

**You may have noticed our logo changed! As our agency continues to evolve to best serve our region, our logo should do the same.**



## WEST CENTRAL MISSOURI COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

### OUR OFFICES

#### Central Office

106 W. 4th Street  
Appleton City, MO 64724

#### Versailles Office

303 W. Newton  
Versailles, MO 65084

#### Nevada Office

123 S. Main  
Nevada, MO 64774

#### Raymore Office

208 West Walnut  
Raymore, MO 64083

#### Liston Center

508 N. Main Street  
Nevada, MO 64774

#### New Growth CDC

550 2nd Street  
Osceola, MO 64776

### CALL US

#### West Central

660-476-2185

#### New Growth

417-646-6900

### GENERAL EMAIL

[info@wcmcaa.org](mailto:info@wcmcaa.org)  
[info@newgrowth.org](mailto:info@newgrowth.org)

### SOCIAL MEDIA

#### Facebook/Instagram

@WestCentralCares  
@NewGrowthMO

### FAX

660-476-5529

### WEBSITE

[wcmcaa.org](http://wcmcaa.org)  
[newgrowthmo.org](http://newgrowthmo.org)



**Fred R. Bunch**  
Board Chair



**Don Boultinghouse**  
Board Vice-Chair



**Leroy Strobe**  
Board Secretary



**Martha J Sander**  
Board Treasurer

**Bates**

Brenda Darr  
Alvin Griffin \*

**Benton**

Thomas Gage  
Amie Breshears  
Larry Berry

**Cass**

Warren "Sonny" Rogers\*  
Helen Friedrich  
Monty Kisner

**Cedar**

Larry Pursley  
Don Boultinghouse\*

**Henry**

Fred Bunch \*  
Dale Lawler

**Hickory**

Shirley Parker

**Morgan**

Teresea Hood

**St. Clair**

Art Neuenschwander\*  
Leroy Strobe \*

**Vernon**

Martha Sander \*  
Cindy Thompson

\*Executive Committee Members

# BOARD MEMBERS 2019-2020

West Central operates with a tripartite board as the governing body for the organization. Of those members, one-third are elected officials, one-third are private interest representatives, and one-third are low-income representatives. This tripartite representation ensures maximum feasible participation in agency decisions, made with local priorities and needs in mind, which help low-income families with the assistance they need. We are grateful for the Board's service and leadership.

## A NOTE FROM FRED R. BUNCH, BOARD CHAIR

Dear Friends:

What a difference a year makes!! Last year at this time, COVID-19, the biggest pandemic since the, so called, Spanish flu of 1918 was raging with vengeance, with no visible end in sight. We are not out of the woods yet, but we are so much better off today than we were a year ago because of the heroes and modern day dragon slayers.

Recently I stumbled onto a book, "There Will Be Dragons" by John Ringo, originally published in 2003. It is science fiction, but what has been science fiction, at its inception, many times, in the future, becomes reality.

A review of the book states that, "In the future there is no want, no war, no disease, nor ill-timed death. The world is a paradise—and then in a moment, it ends.....Everywhere people who have never known a moment of want or pain are left wondering how to survive."

"But scattered across the face of the earth are communities which have returned to the natural life of soil and small farm. In the village of Ravens's Mill, Edmund Talbot, master smith and unassuming

historian, finds that all the problems of the world are falling in his lap. Refugees are flooding in, bandits are roaming the woods,....Enemies, new and old, gather like jackals around a wounded lion. But what the jackals do not know is that while old he may be, this lion is far from death."---He is a dragon slayer!!!!

West Central Missouri Community Action Agency has been a dragon slayer since inception in the mid 1960s. We have been slaying dragons for well over fifty years!---And I have no reason to believe we will not continue to be doing so for another 50 plus years.

West Central is so good and successful because of the heroes of its dragon slaying staff and the continued "no is not an answer" and "yes we can" leadership of our head dragon slayer, President and CEO, Chris Thompson. West Central has been at war with poverty since our inception. Adversity, challenges, high energy, initiative, innovation, successful outcomes, and trend setting, set us apart from others.

The staff could not do their great job without the commitment, guidance, and involvement of our dedicated Board of Directors.

We have always had compassionate and interested partners. We continue to develop,"wow!" and work with growing numbers of generous and thoughtful partners.

West Central will continue to help people and communities reach their fullest potential by cultivating and coordinating resources, building partnerships and advocating for change. --All of this with the vision of a region where people and communities are thriving. And we achieve this based upon our values of equity, education, encouragement, empowerment, and excellence.

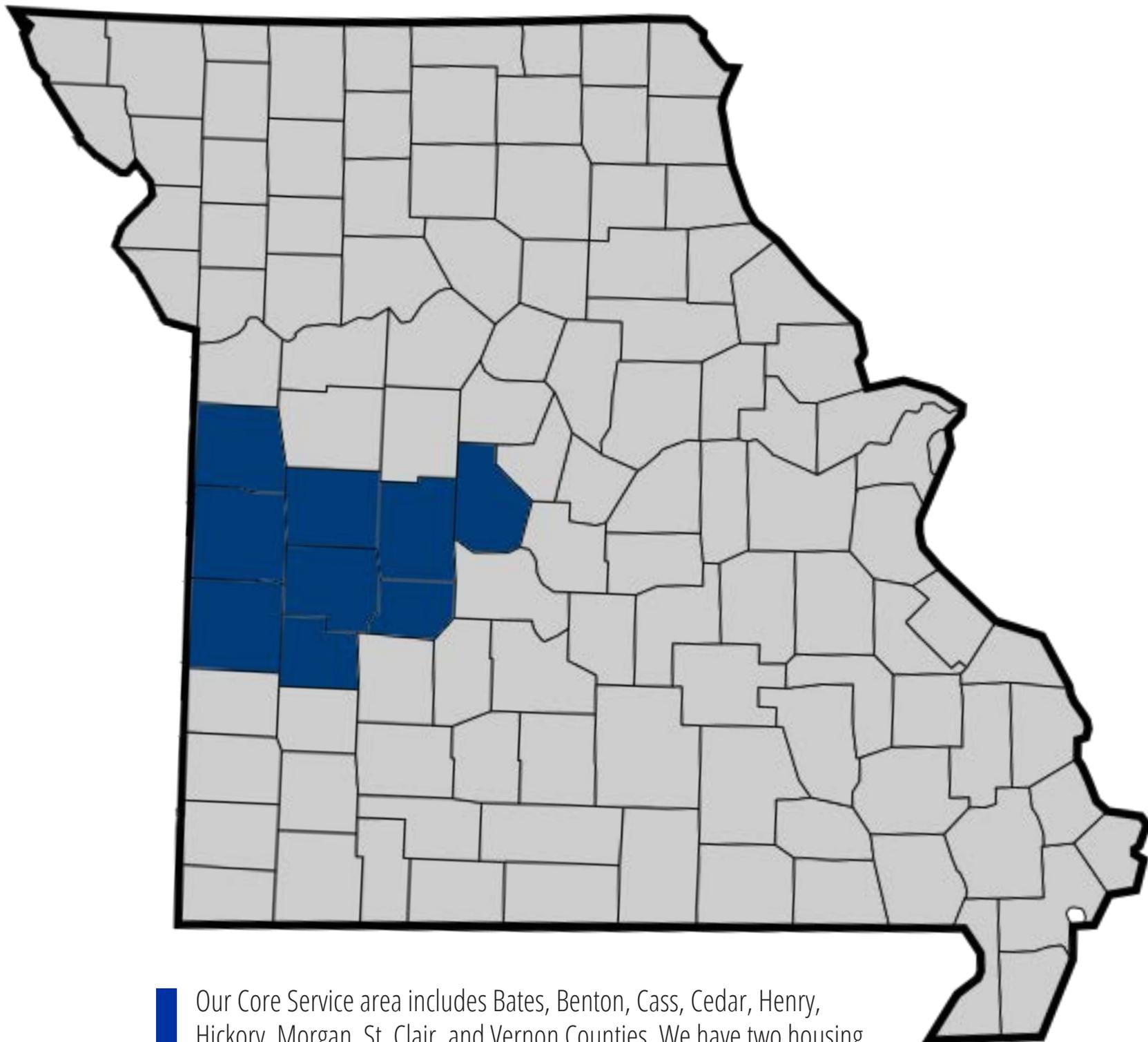
We will continue to go forth and do what we do, but be better at it with each passing, day, month, and year.

But, be aware and vigilant..... There will be dragons!!!! And West Central and its partners will be there to help slay them.

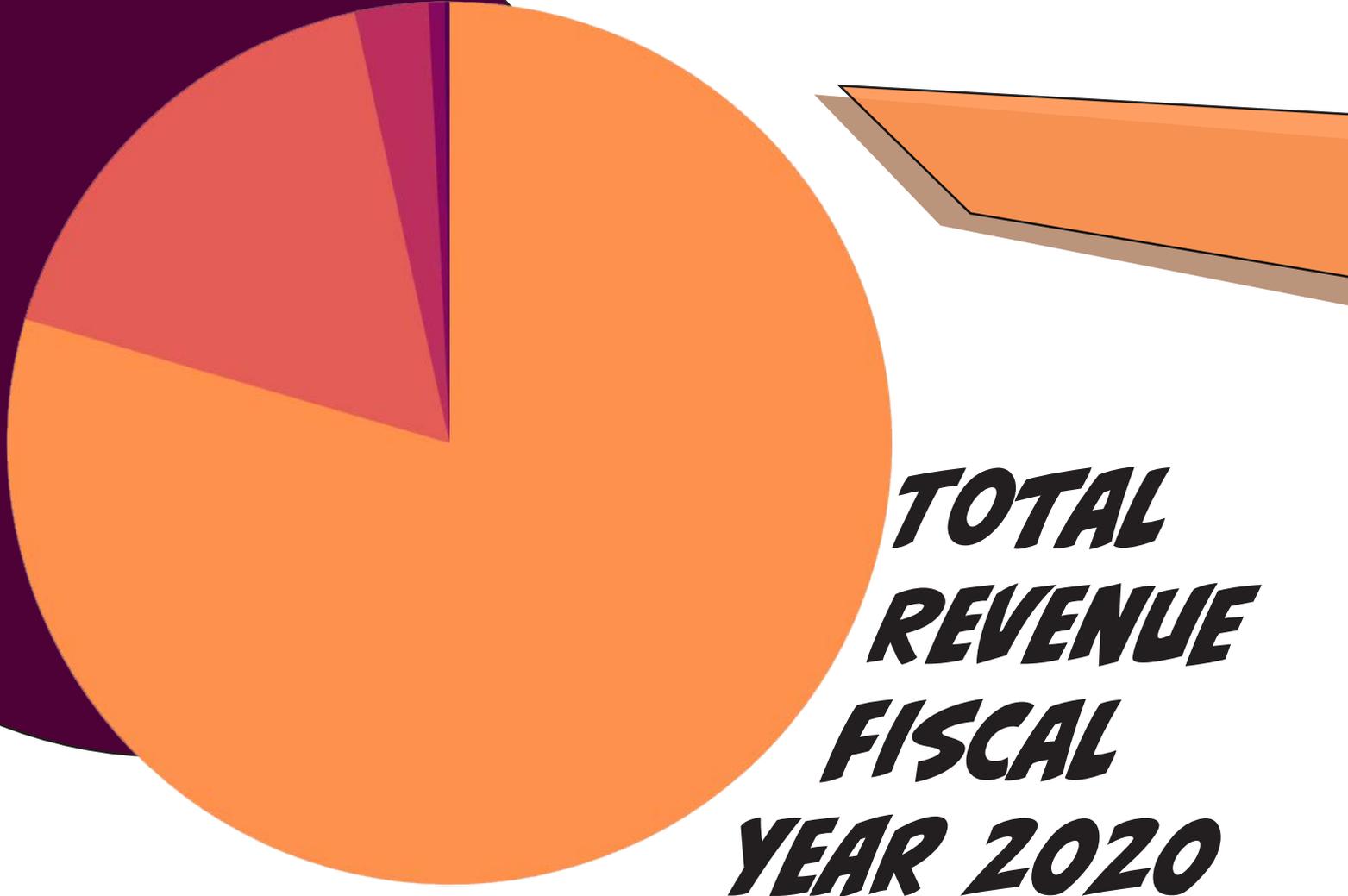
# ***THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE***

## **HEROES CLOSE TO HOME**

Our Agency has Heroes in several areas of West Central Missouri. Below you can find where our core service region is.



Our Core Service area includes Bates, Benton, Cass, Cedar, Henry, Hickory, Morgan, St. Clair, and Vernon Counties. We have two housing properties in Jackson County. Read more about our housing properties on page 13.



# ***TOTAL REVENUE FISCAL YEAR 2020***

FY20: 9/1/2019 - 8/31/2020

Grant Revenue	\$11,427,845
Rental and Housing Revenue	\$2,444,525
Fee for Service	\$386,316
Contributions	\$83,854
Investment Income	\$25,509
Total Revenue	\$14,368,049

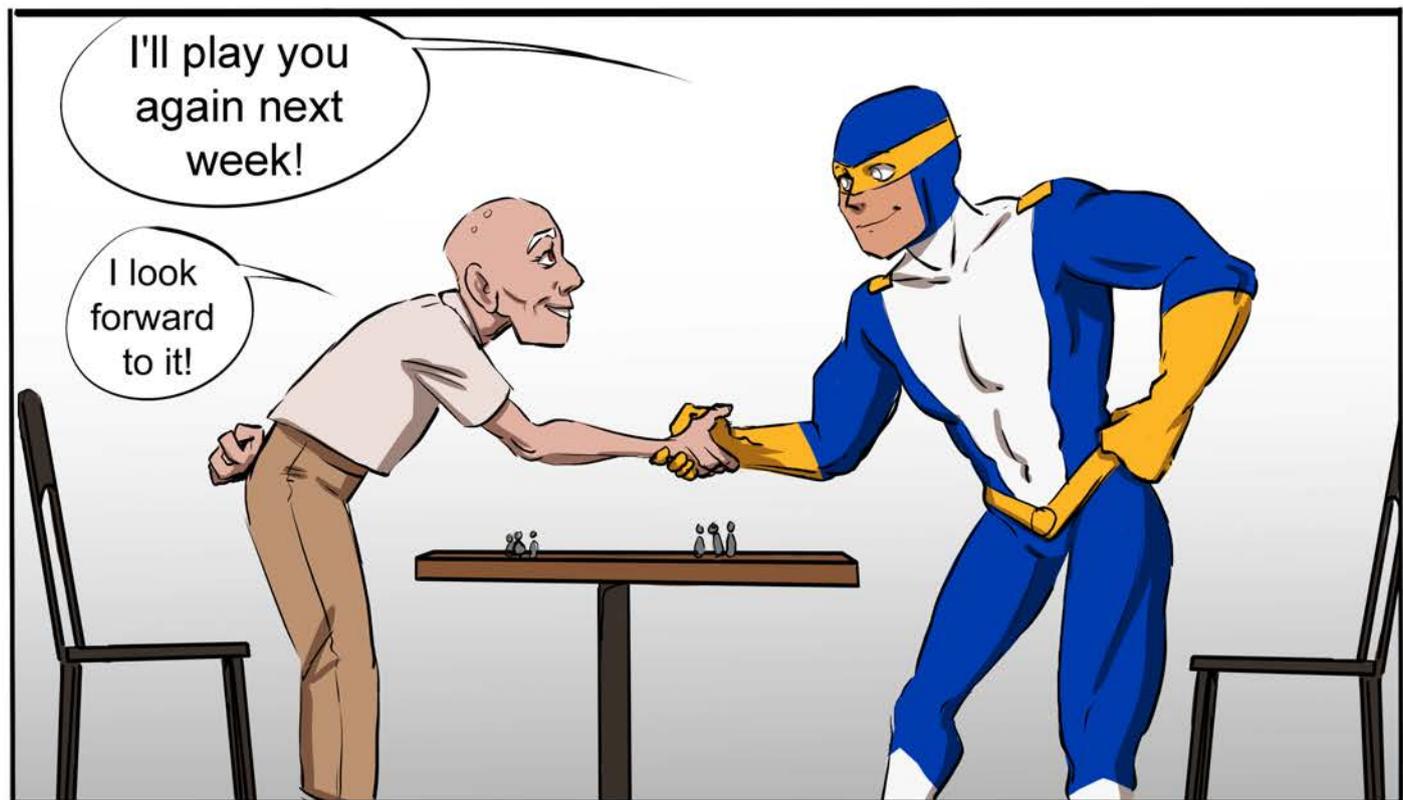
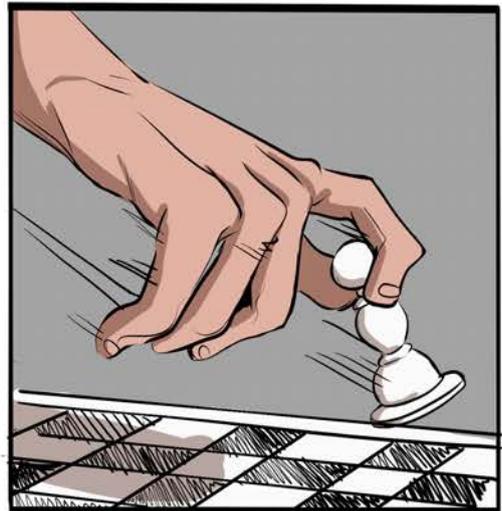
## ***FUNDING HEROES***

# GRANT REVENUE BREAKDOWN

WEST CENTRAL RECIEVES FUNDING FROM A VARIETY OF FUNDING PARTNERS AND HAS OVER 60 CONTRACTS IN PLACE WITH LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL AGENCIES. OUR SERVICES WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT FUNDING FROM THESE AGENCIES.

Department of Health and Human Services	\$1,890,499
Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$7,621,900
Department of Energy	\$543,866
Department of Agriculture	\$179,650
Department of Labor	\$87,150
Department of Veteran Affairs	\$14,130
Department of Homeland Security	\$13,188
Title XIX Personal Care	\$346,070
United Way	\$26,981
Other Grant Revenue	\$704,411

# SEÑOR CARE VS SENIOR BOREDOM



# COMMUNITY SERVICES

SEÑOR CARE WAS CAUGHT IN AN INTENSE SHOWDOWN WITH HIS FRIEND, MR. GENE. TAKING ON SENIOR BOREDOM AND ISOLATION ARE AMONG THE MANY THINGS THE HEROES IN COMMUNITY SERVICES TACKLE. COMMUNITY SERVICES IS MADE UP OF THESE SERVICES:

- **Community & Family Initiatives**
- **Food Systems**
- **Senior Care**
- **Emergency Assistance**
- **LIHEAP**

## COMMUNITY & FAMILY INITIATIVES

### HEALTH AND WEALTH NETWORK

#### **Vision & Mission**

The Health and Wealth Network envisions a future in which residents have resources and opportunities to thrive. Its inaugural Rides to Health and Wealth program demonstrates the Network's mission of connecting resources and building collaboration.

#### **Driving Success**

The formative network added two more members with the 2019 award of one-year strategic planning grant support from the Health Resources and Services Administration: Compass Health and Cedar County Memorial Hospital. Through task force working groups, the planning process has engaged more than 40 healthcare and community service organizations. The resulting Health and Wealth Network and its Rides to Health and Wealth program cover the nine rural west central Missouri counties of Bates, Benton, Cedar, Henry, Hickory, Morgan, Polk, St. Clair, and Vernon.

#### **Program in Action**

Thom Reece is a 77-year-old veteran who does not drive and does not have a vehicle of his own. Getting everyday shopping done, or traveling to medical appointments, is a big deal without transportation options in and around his rural community of Appleton City.

**"I COULD NOT HAVE MADE IT FOR MY APPOINTMENTS IF WEST CENTRAL HAD NOT COORDINATED THE RIDE"**

**-Mr. Reece**



### **Programs Include**

- Step Up to Leadership
- Cyber Seniors
- Life Skills
- Photo Voice
- Back to School Fairs
- Food Pantry
- Emergency Assistance

*Asking for help is so hard and humbling, but you 3 women made me feel so comfortable.*

The impact that Linda, Laurie, and Darlene had on one of our clients.

# FOOD SYSTEMS

## Food Systems

**Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb)** - The Double Up Food Bucks program was offered at five area farmers markets from October 2019 to Sept. 2020. During that time, these five markets reimbursed their farmer vendors \$3950 in DUFb tokens that were spent by 17 customers. That translates into 17 customers taking home almost \$4000 in fresh fruits and vegetables from these farmers markets.

**Farmer Assistance and Logistics**- In December of 2019, the Food Systems Program was awarded a 3-yr. USDA Local Food Promotions Program grant. Through this grant project titled "West Central Food Value Chain Project." In collaboration with four grant sub-awardees, West Central is working to develop and strengthen the food value chain in our region connecting all stakeholders along the food supply chain. In the first year of the project we have hired a full time Food Value Chain Coordinator and helped drive \$123,500 in local food sales to buyers across the region.

**The Beginning Farmer Rancher Development project** has completed its second year. The program is working with five partner organization to help beginning farmers across KS and MO. In the second year of this project, we have provided technical assistance to over 30 farmers. Four workshops were held virtually with a combined 253 people in attendance.

**Farm to Fork Summit**- Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the Farm to Fork Summit was held virtually. It was held over the course of 3 weeks with participation from 150 people.

**Logistics**- The Food Systems program has helped organize the delivery of food from local west central farms to buyers in the Kansas City Region.

**Matching farmers with markets**- As a result of our work 13 beginning farmers have access to new wholesale markets.

**Farm to School**- The Food Systems team applied to the USDA Farm to School program to fund work we would like to do in this program.

**Farm SHARE**: 2500 lbs of local food was purchased and distributed to 75 low-income families



## Lessons Learned

Working in Food Systems is complicated work that takes a systemic approach. Many of the issues we work on are interconnected and affected on a national level. So when change occurs on a national level, like changes to the SNAP program or food requirements in schools, our program must adapt and pivot to those changes the best we can. A major adaptation and pivot we experienced this year was due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The pandemic revealed many issues with the way our food system is organized and how dependent we are on large specialized supply chains. It also inspired people to get involved in the food system from hunger relief projects to buying local. Many people started to pay attention to the food system. This was good for our food systems work as it raised awareness about what we are doing. The uncertainty of what was going to happen next and the pace at which the food system was shifting in the early days of the pandemic were a big challenge. Some projects that we were able to do well during the pandemic were to help match farmers with new customers, help farmers get their business into ecommerce, getting fresh local food into the hands of those in need, and matching farmers with mentors. Some things that were a little more challenging were, convening partners along the supply chain, working with partners in the wholesale market, and keeping up with the shifting realities of the pandemic.

The food system landscape is still shifting as things re-open. We are continuing to adapt our programs and programming to adjust so that we can be a resource for farmer and other organizations involved in our food system. We are looking forward to resuming in person stakeholder meetings.

## Food Pantry Distribution

We currently have a food pantry in our Central office, serving St. Clair County, as well as our food pantry in Raymore, serving Cass County. 2020 was a year where food pantry and food distribution proved vital to our communities. Here is how we helped feed our region.

WCMCAA Raymore Office Food Pantry Harvesters numbers 2020

**Total Households Served: 3,319**

**Total Individuals Served: 6,741**

**3,604 Adults - 1,930 Children - 1,207 Seniors**

**11,643 Pounds of Food**

**9,703 Meals**

# SENIOR CARE

## **Born Out of Necessity**

Senior Care Referral Network began in April 2020 as a joint effort between In-Home Services and Community Services in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. In-Home Services, a billable service program serving seniors and disabled, stopped aides from going into the home as clients were the most vulnerable to COVID-19. Eventually, aides were able to provide only the most essential services to clients, but this left many clients without any contact and many aides with little or no work. With support from Community Services, Senior Care allowed aides to make routine phone calls to check on the status of elderly clients and were offered part time work through the food pantry. West Central completed the sale of In-Home Services to Advantage Home Care in August 2020. Senior Care continued solely supported from CSBG. In October 2020 (FY21), Senior Care began accepting participants from outside the In-Home roster and continues to evolve today.



**Above** - The participant lives in Cass County. She suffers from lung issues and has frequent lung infections. Some days she is very weak and has mobility issues. We were able to purchase a toilet riser for her to use in her home. This had helped her tremendously with mobility and strength issues. Her words when the toilet riser was delivered were, **"Thank you so much. I really appreciate this."**

# ENERGY ASSISTANCE

## **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**

Energy Assistance will give you a one-time payment to help pay your main fuel heating bill during the months of November – 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.

A disconnect notice or in threat of disconnect is not needed to receive Energy Assistance. In FY20, there were **5,003 APPLICATIONS** submitted and of those 5,003 applications, 2,763 were from elderly or disabled individuals.

## **Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP)**

Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) can help you pay your fuel bills when your energy is shut off or 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.

**341 ECIP APPLICATIONS** were submitted during FY20.

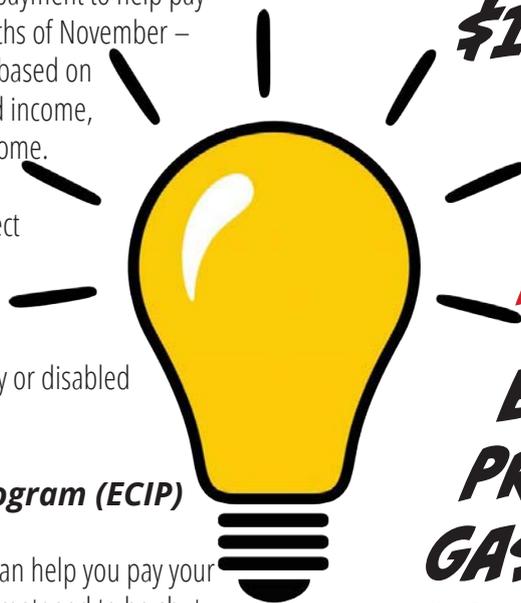
## **BY THE NUMBERS**

**TOTAL BENEFITS PAID FOR FY20**

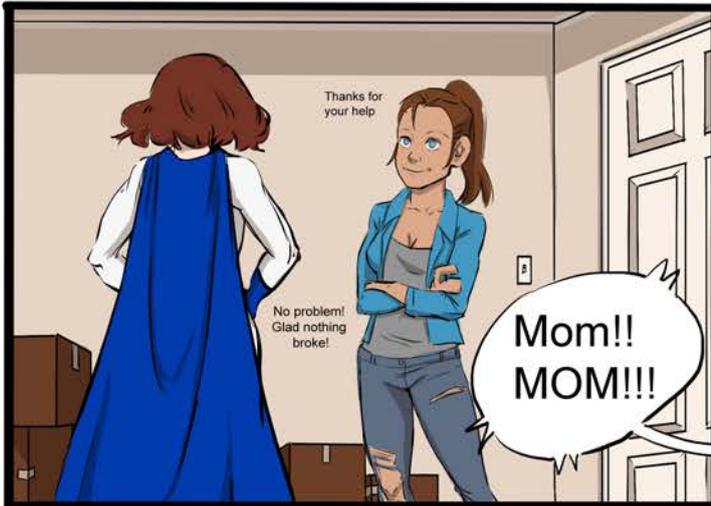
**\$1,173,183.45**

**VARIOUS FORMS OF HEATING PAID:**

**ELECTRICITY  
PROPANE  
GAS  
WOOD**



# THE CLIPBOARD VS THE SINK CREATURE



# HOUSING ENRICHMENT

THE CLIPBOARD THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A ROUTINE DAY. MOVING IN A SINGLE MOTHER AND HER CUTE KIDS... BUT NO DAY ON THE JOB IS EVER ROUTINE. THANKFULLY, THE CLIP BOARD WAS READY TO HELP! SAVING THE DAY BY DEFEATING THE SINK CREATURE LURKING IN THE DRAIN AND BRINGING BACK SUSHI FOR THE WEST CENTRAL HERO TEAM.

## MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING

Our heroes in Housing Enrichment know all too well that they must be ready for anything! While they may not be defeating a sink creature, our weatherization specialists never know what exactly a house will need during a weatherization inspection, but they always get to the bottom of it! Our housing coordinators, property management coordinators, and rest of the Housing Enrichment team all know that every family is different and requires innovative ideas to tackle the hurdles they face.



**Above** - During the COVID-19 lockdown, providing services to seniors in our Senior Living Facilities became challenging. Here you see a resident of Walnut Estates receiving a hair cut on her porch. A way to provide them with a service they need, while still ensuring the safest way to do so. The staff in the Housing Enrichment department had to become creative in how they took care of their residents. Bringing in live music, a goat parade, sending cards, delivering flowers, and much more were just a few of those ways.

<b>Service Provided</b>	<b>Individuals Served</b>
Wellness Classes (includes repeat participants)	9,960
Prepared Meals	4,493
Food Distribution	1,687
Utility Payments	266
Mediation/Customer Advocacy Intervention	261
Health Insurance	150
Skill Classes	141
Transportation Services	104
Immunizations	71
Community Gardening Activities	63
Exercise/Fitness	50
Financial Management Programs	48
Utility Arrears Payment	17
School Supplies (Antioch Hills Property)	13
Case Management	12
Legal Assistance	4

**Households who obtained safe and affordable housing - 399 units**

### Our Properties

-By county-

- Benton: Oaktree Villa
- Cass: Greenleaf, Hawthorn, & Walnut Estates
- Cedar: Cedar Ridge & Maplewood Estates
- Henry: Antioch Hills
- Hickory: Hickory Estates
- Jackson: Prairie & Willow Estates
- St. Clair: Appleton Estates

## ENERGY CONSERVATION UNIT

Besides owning housing properties, housing enrichment also strives to improve the homes of qualified individuals. A safe and comfortable home environment is essential to the overall well-being of the family living there.

Here's how our Energy Conservation Unit helped people during FY20:

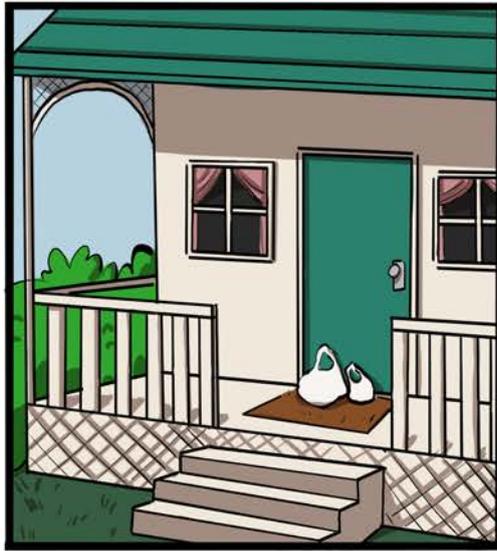
**31 - Homes Weatherized**

**14 - HeRO homes completed**

**1 - Urgent Repair home completed**

**71 - Individuals helped**

# THE FLYING HELPER MAKES A STOP AT MRS. DORTHY'S



# HOUSING ASSISTANCE

THE FLYING HELPER CAN BE SEEN SOARING AROUND FROM PLACE TO PLACE, HELPING ANYONE SHE CAN ALONG THE WAY. THE HEROES IN THE HOUSING ASSISTANCE DEPARTMENT KNOW ALL ABOUT GOING THE EXTRA MILE TO HELP SOMEONE IN NEED!

## By the Numbers

Housing Assistance Paid \$5,584,000

Total Families Assisted 1302

Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program Participants 135

FSS Escrow Credits \$144,190

Homeowners Assisted 5

Families Issued Assistance from the Housing Choice Voucher Program waiting list 173

**Go to pages 20 & 21 to read success stories of participants of the Rapid Re-Housing Program and Housing Choice Voucher Program**



**Above** - Sonya Coppage, has successfully obtained all but one of her goals in her five years with the FSS program. Sonya's final goal is to obtain reliable transportation and she is going to be able to with her escrow funds of \$8,480.76.

## TRANSITIONS SERVICES

**One of the programs that falls under the Housing Assistance umbrella is Transition Services.**

### What it is

Transitions Services program allows resources and guidance to be available to individuals and families who are experiencing a housing crisis and who otherwise may not be able to self-resolve. With Transitions Services there is assistance to households both in achieving short to medium term stabilization, as well as guidance in achieving their goal of more permanent stability. The program also sets measurable goals laid out by our Agency's strategic plan to track progress, outcomes, and trends, using this information to improve how we deliver services.

West Central currently fulfills a role as a regional access point for the Missouri Coordinated Entry System and participates in the annual statewide Point in Time Count (PITC) which entails going out into the community one night of the year and completing a census of unsheltered persons who report as literally homeless. During FY20, the PITC was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But that did not stop the need presented by displaced individuals, many of whom got help.

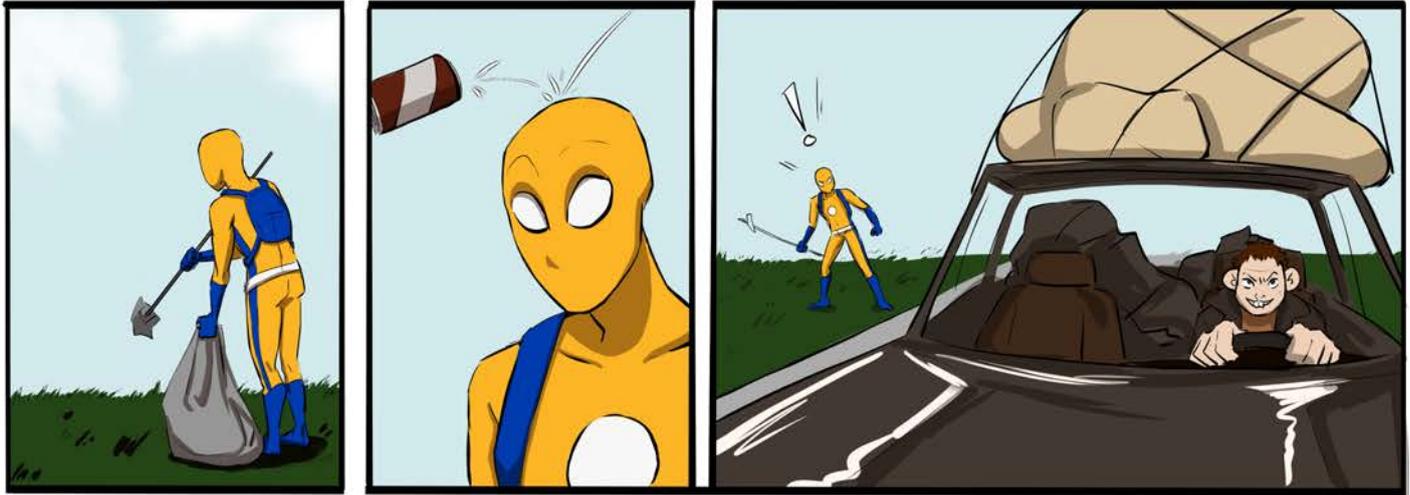
### Emergency Solutions Grant

The Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) is a federal grant program designed to provide emergency assistance to persons who are currently homeless, very low-income persons at imminent risk of homelessness, and those persons who are fleeing domestic violence. ESG funds are intended to be used as part of a crisis response system using a low barrier, housing-focused approach to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. ESG operates in accordance with the Housing First policy. This approach enables our clients to have quick access to housing services without prerequisites or conditions beyond meeting program eligibility criteria.

**"Time is a critical factor for people experiencing a housing crisis"**

**-Austin Martin**, Transitions Services Coordinator

# MAIN-STREET MASK KEEPS THE SMALL BUSINESS DISTRICT CLEAN



# ECONOMIC INCLUSION

MAIN-STREET MASK WAS OUT OF WORK AND DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO TURN. THROUGH HIS CONNECTION WITH ECONOMIC INCLUSION, HE FOUND WORK TAKING CARE OF HIS COMMUNITY! THE HEROES IN ECONOMIC INCLUSION DO WHAT IT TAKES TO ENSURE WELL EQUIPPED, WORKING CITIZENS AND A THRIVING ECONOMY IN OUR REGION. READ ABOUT HOW THEY DO JUST THAT!

## EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

### **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Program (WIOA)**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Program provides career services and job training services to eligible Adults and Dislocated Workers, in Cass County, to enable them to obtain and retain employment that allows for self-sufficiency. This program encompasses recruitment, eligibility, assessment and intake, program enrollment, case management, and follow-up. Major program enrollment is formal skill training opportunities with access to funding for vocational/occupational skill training. All training is geared toward making the participant more employable for trending employment opportunities. The current trending program categories for skill training are Information Technology, Healthcare, Logistics/Transportation, Advanced Manufacturing, Financial Services and Business Services. Supportive Services are allowed for approved transportation or job related necessities. West Central enrolled **16 participants** in FY20.

### **SkillUP**

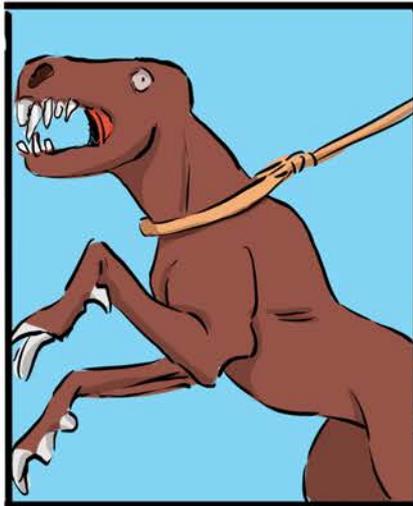
The SkillUP program provides Food Stamp (SNAP) recipients opportunities to gain skills, training, or experience that will improve their ability to attain employment and decrease their dependency on public assistance programs. The intention of the SkillUP program is rapid attachment to work that leads to self-sufficiency for individuals and families. The program offers job search training, education, and supportive services to participants. The SkillUP program provides short-term training in the quickest possible time in order to lead to employment. Training should be completed within one year or less, must align with the participant's employment plan, and lead to employment and self-sufficiency. West Central **served 35 individuals** during FY20.

### **Resilient through the Storm**

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it was thought to devastate employment and training programs across the State. We dug in and made contingency plans and really bombarded some folks with flyers, postcards, phone calls, and any avenue to get attention to our programs. COVID-19 did make eligibility documentation a bit difficult in the beginning. But, being resilient and making changes and adapting to new ways of conducting business did make for a very successful year. Some things were made easier - such as attending school for education that could be accomplished virtually - as people were confined to their homes they took advantage of the opportunity to further their education. Some policy changes, especially regarding client signatures and making assessments available virtually really enhanced our chance of engaging participants into the programs. As it turned out, COVID-19 increased our ability to serve participants!



# COMMUNITY COWGIRL WRANGLES A PESKY PACK OF COVID-19 MONSTERS



# NEW GROWTH - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**COMMUNITY COWGIRL SHOWS COVID-19 WHO IS BOSS! SHE IS NOT ABOUT TO LET SMALL BUSINESSES, INCLUDING FAMILY FARMS, FALL PREY TO THE THREATS PRESENTED TO ENTREPRENEURS IN OUR REGION. READ ALL THE WAYS NEW GROWTH PROTECTED AND ASSISTED OUR REGION FROM COVID-19 CHALLENGES.**

The villain of this year's story: The novel coronavirus infection, which preyed on the already weak support system for small businesses in rural America. West central Missouri's rural microentrepreneurs had an even harder time getting help because business development and financing resources in the region are scattered, stranded, and starved. New Growth worked with partners in FY20 to coordinate and build new small business resources that in FY21 are generating significant local economic results.



New Growth worked with START HERE Business Acceleration Network partners to organize the START HERE Revolving Loan Fund and apply for funding to ramp up small business technical assistance, including credit building help entrepreneurs need to advance to traditional financing. A key resource in success is rural small business lending expert Lisa Jones, who came to West Central in mid-FY20 to head up the agency's new Economic Inclusion unit. New Growth and Economic Inclusion teamed up to develop and activate the community development corporation's entrepreneur support programs.

Central to it all is the START HERE Business Acceleration Network, which launched in spring 2019 at a New Growth-hosted Fifth Monday community economic development luncheon. New Growth convenes and coordinates START HERE. Members put support for rural entrepreneurs at the forefront of building a region where all people can thrive. More at [www.startheremo.org](http://www.startheremo.org).

New Growth and network partners organized the START HERE Revolving Loan Fund in FY20 to address a significant gap in smaller dollar loans to rural entrepreneurs (\$500 to \$50,000). The START HERE team also formalized a referral network among partners that ensures all are working together to make sure no entrepreneur falls through the cracks.

This referral network and beginning loan fund were instrumental in New Growth and West Central's success with FY20 funding applications. In FY21 New Growth and Economic Inclusion unit teamwork provided for new business assistance and credit building staff along with the launch in FY21 of the New Growth Women's Business Center, which serves 13 Missouri and two Kansas counties.

In addition to microentrepreneur assistance work, New Growth's FY20 focus included its Making Rural Visible project for getting more area attractions found on VisitMO.com, partnership support to West Central's Food Systems program for a successful 2020 Farm to Fork summit, and a central role in the Rides to Health and Wealth strategic plan, which is the foundation for West Central's ongoing and growing transportation program.



**Left** - The work in FY20, made this possible in FY21. Celebrating CC's Butcher Shop's microenterprise loan are [front L-R] Rod and Crystal Casteel and [back L-R] Kelly Asbury, Lisa Jones, Jo Ann Lane, and Amie Breshears. CC's received the startup boost they needed from the START HERE Revolving Loan Fund.

**START HERE Members:** New Growth, West Central Missouri Community Action Agency, Missouri Small Business Development Centers, Kaysinger Basin Regional Planning Commission, University of Missouri Extension Offices, MOSourceLink, Osage Valley Electric Cooperative.

# REAL LIFE HEROES

## WEST CENTRAL IS THE HERO FOR A MOTHER OF SIX

***“If you could fix one thing right now, what would it be?”***

Through the Family Self-Sufficiency program at West Central Missouri Community Action Agency, this question unlocks the door to a world of resources that families may never have dreamed they could access. In some cases, this question, along with support in the program for saving money, puts families on a game-changing path to home ownership.

Dawn Kopecky, a mother of six and a resident of Belton, in Cass County, Missouri, is a prime example. Hard work and guidance through this program helped her achieve what she thought was impossible, including a stable higher paying job and enough money to make a down payment on a house.

“I have been through a lot in these last years. In 2012, my then nine-year old daughter suddenly died of a brain aneurysm. This really took a toll on me and I went into a severe depression. In the next few years, one of my children had behavioral and mental health issues. I was almost to the point of giving up.”

### ***Fresh start***

In an effort to provide her family with a new start and atmosphere, Dawn moved in 2016 to the Belton area. She used rental support she receives through the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) to secure an affordable place to live. She also enrolled in the associated Family Self Sufficiency program. West Central Missouri Community Action Agency operates the Housing Choice Voucher and Family Self Sufficiency programs in its nine-county region.

Dawn’s decision paired her with a Family Self Sufficiency field specialist and superhero. Dawn set goals through the program and set her heart on one day becoming a homeowner. She also worked her way through more disruption in her life, including being shot in 2017 in a domestic abuse incident. Dawn persevered. The FSS superhero was there with her every step of the way.

“[She] treated me as an equal and never looked down on me.,” Dawn said. “She would call and check on me, give me encouraging words, and answered all my many questions. It is because of this I kept on trying to do better.”

### ***Steady progress***

Dawn completed her resume, built positive relationships, improved her credit, and moved up at work. She also saved money through an escrow account that the program sets up for each participant. The agreement includes putting more money into the account when employment and income improve.

The potential to build up her savings inspired Dawn. “I decided I would try to get a better position at work with better pay, which put more monthly into my escrow account.”

After three and half years, all of Dawn’s hard work paid off. She was hired as a permanent manager and a month later was offered a temporary higher paying management job, which she still holds. She also improved her credit score through the program’s support with budgeting and a credit action plan.

Then, ***her dreams came true***: She was approved for a home loan with \$20,000 in escrow for a down payment.

***“I WOULD HAVE NEVER HAD THE INSPIRATION OR MEANS TO DO ALL OF THIS WITHOUT YOUR HELP;”*** Dawn told West Central.

## RAPID TRANSITION PROGRAM SAVES LIVES

### **The Before**

Dorothy Andrade, a caregiver of two young grandchildren, and a now resident of Belton, Missouri is a survivor through and through. In 2017, Dorothy and her grandchildren experienced a break in that turned into an attack and an attempted kidnap of her now 11- and 13-year-old grandchildren. Dorothy and her grandchildren had bounced around from hotel to hotel attempting to seek adequate shelter. When COVID-19 hit, it exacerbated her situation, leaving her and the children literally homeless. Dorothy sought shelters, but the limited shelters in her location were all full. Dorothy searched for any shelter, but she did not have a way to put down a first and last deposit, especially when COVID had skyrocketed the price of rent. She was put on a waitlist, with documentation that required fifty pages just for the application process. With no extended family, Dorothy had a limited safety net and support network and was not sure where to turn to.

### **The transition**

Dorothy, who had no home or place to go to, came to a food pantry to seek assistance, and that is when the transition began. She was linked to a Salvation Army in the area, and they were able to provide Dorothy and the children a hotel voucher to provide temporary assistance. In July, the Salvation Army had connected Dorothy to West Central and the search for a new home began.

### **The basics are met**

Through West Central's Rapid Rehousing program, and Austin Martin the transitions coordinator, they were able to help Dorothy and her family find temporary stability. "Austin has been awesome through this whole process", Dorothy said, **"THEY HAVE WALKED US THROUGH EVERY STEP OF IT...THEY SAVED OUR LIVES IN SO MANY WAYS"**

The Rapid Rehousing program works to provide an opportunity for individuals and families that are literally homeless apply for temporary aid in the form of rental assis-

tance or rental and utility deposits.

"When I first started the program about a year ago, initially they helped pay our rent. I had been given an opportunity to getting life back and getting back on my feet." – Dorothy.

Overtime, Dorothy has begun contributing towards her housing and is actively engaged in working towards receiving permanent housing.

### **But it does not stop there.**

The transitions program recognizes that many times people with housing needs may also have other needs that are not being met as well. This means taking a comprehensive approach that goes beyond providing rental assistance, and helps clients achieve self-sufficiency by focusing on stability goals, offering case management, and connecting people to local resources.

The staff and program have worked with Dorothy to ensure other essential needs are being met and that she has everything she needs. They have assisted her not only with housing, but with food assistance, health services, and services for her grandchildren. "They meet you where you are. First, things like food and shelter were met. The rest comes along the way. They have provided me with so much, especially a sense of security. They find solutions that work."

### **The After**

With the care from West Central and the hard work Dorothy has put in, she and her two grandchildren are now living in a home they love. Additionally, the home is located right next to a playground for the children to play with no worries anymore. It now provides Dorothy and her family a sense of community, and most importantly, a sense of care and security.

**"We have everything that we need, and it has made a huge difference. I really cannot thank West Central enough".**



**Above** - Dawn Kopecky stands on the front steps of her new home! It was made possible through the assistance given by the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program and the effort of Dawn.

**NOT ALL HEROES WEAR MASKS OR COSTUMES!**



# OUR COMMUNITY HEROES

1st Baptist Church  
1st Christian Church  
54 Retail  
A. Walton  
A-1 Body Shop  
AC Christian Church  
AC Mason Lodge  
Adrian Bank  
Advantage Home Care  
Appleton City High School  
ACHS Booster Club  
Adrian Kreisler Drug  
Avail Salon-Camdenton  
Al Benz  
Aldi  
Allen Street Baptist Church  
Allison Tire and Auto  
Althoff Auto Sales  
Amy Bishop  
Ann Snape  
Annalou Streiff  
Anonymous Donor  
Apex Driving Academy  
Aviation Fabricators  
Barbara Hering  
Bates County Elks  
Becky Clark  
Belton Christian Church  
Belton Post Office-Stamp out Hunger  
Benny Brower  
Beth Meyers  
Bland-Hackleman Funeral Home  
Bland Used Cars  
Blister Smith  
Blue Cross/Blue Shield KC  
Bonnie Sargent  
Bright Futures  
Brittany Dawn  
Bulldog Towing and Auto Repair  
Burt Walker  
Caden Benz  
Calvary Baptist

Cana Custer  
Care Connection  
Carnegie Village  
Carolyn Colson  
Carolyn Hellwig  
Carolyn Sanders  
Carolyn Watkins  
Carolyn Henderson  
Casey's General Store  
Cass County Commision  
Catholic Charities  
Cattleman's Association  
Cedar County Commision  
Cedar County Hospital  
Cedar County MU Extension  
Cedar County Senior Center  
Church of Christ  
Citizens State Bank  
City of Nevada, MO  
Community 1st Bank  
Community Foundation of the Ozarks  
Community Outreach Nevada  
Compass Health and Wellness  
Connie Locke  
Crossroads Methodist Breakfast Club  
Crossroads Methodist Church  
Crown Care  
Crystal Yarnell  
Dale Borgman  
Danny Knox  
Darrell Pohlman  
Daryl Walls  
Don Miller  
Dorothy Holt  
Dorothy Pierce  
Dr. Cassady  
D.S.W.A. Certified Public Accountants  
DYM Remarketing Services  
Eagles #4279  
Ed Mortin  
El Do Youth Center, Inc.  
Elks Lodge Clinton

Ellett Memorial Hospital  
Evans Drug  
Everygy  
Fanitta Sipes  
Farm Bureau  
Farmers Elevator  
First Baptist Church  
First Christian Church  
First National Bank  
Floors and More  
Food Fair  
Friends of Lynz (Lindsey Simmons)  
Grace Baptist Church/Harrisonville  
H&R Block  
Hair Tech-Hermitage  
Harrisonville High School  
Harvester's  
Hawthorn Bank  
Hayden Fleeman  
Healthy Nevada  
Heart-N-Hand Ministries  
Heart of America Redistribution  
Heather Brown  
Hickory County CARES  
Hickory County Child Care Advocacy Group  
Hickory County Health Department  
Hickory County Senior Center  
Holly Clark  
Hudson School  
Hy Vee  
Images Salon  
Jack Hartline  
Juanita Irvin  
Jennifer Gresham  
Jerrun Kennedy  
Jerry's Pest Management  
Karen Berten  
Karen Oberly  
Karol Stephan  
Kathy Rodick  
KC Rim Shop  
Kansas City Power and Light

# Donors FY20

Kevin Watkins  
Ladies Tri-Lakes Auxiliary #4279  
Landmark Restaurant  
Lathrop Construction  
LCN Graphics  
Legacy Bank and Trust  
Legal Aid  
Liberty Utilities  
Linda Sherva  
Living Word Church  
Looks Unlimited  
Lord of Love Women's Group  
Lord of Love Church  
Loretta's Attic  
Marsha Driemeir  
Martha Friedmeyer  
Mary Lynn Scudder  
Medical Lodge  
Michael Love  
Mid Missouri Bank  
Midwest Lumber  
Ministerial Alliance  
Missouri Palliative and Hospice Care  
Missouri Extension  
Missouri SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education)  
MO Dept. of Conservation  
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas  
Mr. and Mrs. Upchurch  
Nataushua Kennedy  
Neta Harline  
Nevada Job Center  
Nevada Police Dept.  
Nevada United Methodist Church  
Nixon Farm  
Oak Star Bank  
On My Own  
Osage Valley Electric Cooperative  
Parents as Teachers - El Dorado Springs  
Pathways  
Pete's of Erie  
Pickering Place  
Post Office-Belton

Preston Bible Baptist Church  
Price Chopper Belton  
Price Chopper Raymore  
Probation Parole  
Quick Trip  
Raymore 4-H  
Raymore Christian Church  
Raymore Lions Club  
Rebecca McKeown  
Redwood Nursing Home  
Robert Sherva  
Robert Whitney  
Robin Siegismund  
Rockville Methodist Church  
Rolling Meadows  
Route 54 Cruisers Car Club  
RR Equipment  
S&B Liquor  
Salon 109  
Share the Harvest  
Sharon Cumpton  
Sheldon Funeral Home  
Shephard's Food Pantry  
Schreiber Foods  
Small Business Administration  
Small Business Development Center - Sedalia  
Sonic  
Spire  
St. Clair County State Bank  
St. Clair County Comission  
St. Mary's School

St. Paul's United Methodist Church  
St. Sabina Catholic Church  
State Farm  
Steve Clark  
Sugar Man  
Suzanna Moreland  
Teresa Lyness  
Terri Starbuck  
The Bloom, LLC  
The Cutting Edge-Buffalo  
The Drew Lewis Foundation  
The Miller Group  
Tiffin Baptist Church  
Trinity United Methodist  
Tyler Clark  
Unilever  
United Way of Greater Kansas City  
University of Missouri  
Vernon County MU Extension  
Walmart  
Wanda Allen  
Willene Engel





# ***WE STAYED OPEN***

USE YOUR SMARTPHONE TO SCAN THE QR CODE AND WATCH THE VIDEO

"I HAVE WORKED AT WEST CENTRAL FOR THE PAST 33 YEARS. 2020 WILL FOREVER LIVE IN MY MIND....

I AM PROUD TO SAY I WORK FOR WEST CENTRAL. I LOVE THE PEOPLE I WORK WITH AND SERVE. I AM PROUD TO SAY WE WERE OPEN AND WE CONTINUED TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO THOSE MOST IN NEED. WE WILL CONTINUE TO BE OPEN AND BE HERE FOR THE ONES IN NEED FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.



NOW, OVER A YEAR LATER, WE ARE GETTING CLOSER TO LIFE AS USUAL. WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT OURSELVES AND WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY IS SIMPLE ... WE ARE ONE TOUGH GROUP AND WE CARE ABOUT THE PEOPLE WE SERVE. WHAT A YEAR IT HAS BEEN ... BUT WE STAYED OPEN."

***KRISTINA KLASS, CCAP***  
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT & SERVICES DIRECTOR



# HEROES IN ACTION



**AN INVESTMENT IN  
WEST CENTRAL IS AN  
INVESTMENT IN YOUR  
COMMUNITY!**



*Give online by scanning the code!*

## Ways to Give

Monetary donations are a great way to invest in your community. Here are some statistics to consider:

- A donation of **\$20.00** will provide gas to one rural family to receive medical attention at a metropolitan hospital.
- A donation of **\$50.00** will help fund an emergency assistance fund to provide utility assistance, rent or mortgage payments to keep a family from becoming homeless.
- A donation of **\$1,000.00** will feed 145 families of four for a week through the community office food pantries.

You can go to [www.wcmcaa.org/donate/](http://www.wcmcaa.org/donate/) to give right now. You can also call our Central Office at 660-476-2185 to donate over the phone. Checks can be mailed or dropped off at any of our local offices.

**Contact Food Services to see how you can donate food items to our local pantries!**



## Non-Monetary Ways to Give

### **Amazon Smile:**

Did you know that a portion of every Amazon purchase can be donated to West Central? All you have to do is put **West Central Missouri Community Action Agency** as your selected charity. Then, every time you shop, some of what you spend can go directly back into YOUR community, at no extra cost to you!

Read more about the Amazon Smile program:

"The AmazonSmile program offers customers the benefit of making a donation to your favorite charity. We're able to provide this benefit to you when you choose to start your shopping at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) or with AmazonSmile turned ON in the Amazon Shopping app on your mobile phone, in part because we expect AmazonSmile to grow primarily through word of mouth instead of paid advertising—and this enables us to fund donations to our customers' favorite organizations."

### **Social Media:**

Getting the word out about our services is a great way to give back to us! Sharing what we offer with your network can look like liking, commenting, and sharing our posts on Facebook and Instagram.

On Facebook, you can also create birthday fundraisers for us! When it is around your birthday, Facebook may prompt you to start a fundraiser. All you have to do is start the fundraiser and enter West Central Missouri Community Action Agency as your charity of choice and tell your friends why they should give!

**TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE TO SEE  
WHERE WE ARE HEADED NEXT YEAR!**

***Every team of super heroes needs a proper vehicle to get them to the people in need! West Central's team will soon be hitting the road in a new mobile initiative!***

West Central's Mobile Action Center (MAC), funded by CSBG CARES is a mobile community initiative. The MAC, a mobile unit, will be a classroom and office on wheels. It will serve and create a community asset by bringing access, resources, and assist communities served by West Central.

Some of the possible functions include:

- Meeting Space
- Classroom Space
- Mini Mobile Food Pantry
- Technology Center



Example of what the MAC will look like. The MAC is set to hit the road to serve communities in FY21!

Inside look of what the MAC space can offer. The space can evolve to meet the needs of the community.

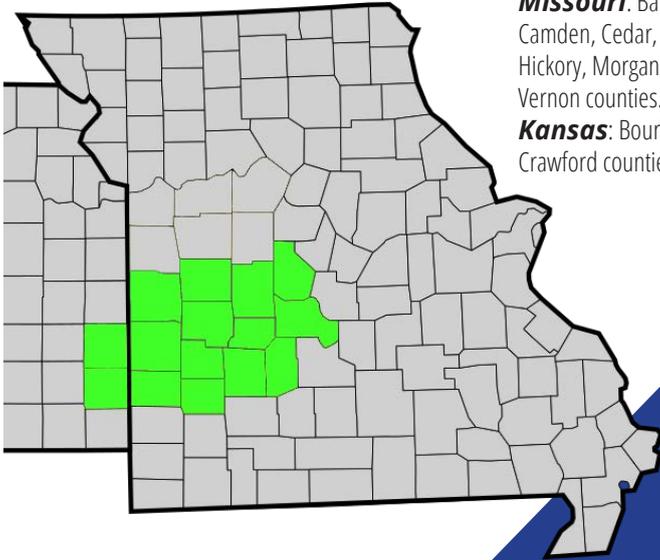




# NEW GROWTH WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER

**Also coming in FY21, a  
super hero HQ for  
all things small  
business!**

West Central ended the year with another fundraising and business assistance development effort in successfully winning SBA designation as a Women's Business Center. The **New Growth Women's Business Center** designation and initial funding helps strengthen and expand the START HERE referral network and revolving loan fund. The NG-WBC covers 15 counties (13 in Missouri and 2 in Kansas).



**Missouri:** Barton, Bates, Benton, Camden, Cedar, Dade, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Morgan, Polk, St. Clair, and Vernon counties.

**Kansas:** Bourbon and Crawford counties.

## OUR PROMISE

In FY21 and beyond, West Central, New Growth, and our Women's Business Center fully commits to **assisting** and **advancing** our rural communities. If there is one thing we know for certain, rural problems require rural solutions. Our team fully intends to seek out the resources already in our communities to help raise the quality of life for every resident in Bates, Benton, Cass, Cedar, Henry, Hickory, Morgan, St. Clair, and Vernon counties as well as all the additional areas our services are provided. Our rich history of serving this region only inspires and challenges us to continue our mission;

***"Helping People. Changing Lives. Since 1965."***

Although we do not know what exactly 2021 will bring, we are sure that it will be met with stories of hope and growth. Whether it be a family who needs a hand up, or a small business who needs the tools to excel in today's markets, we are ready to assist and advance our clients and communities.

If you are interested in learning more about what we do here at West Central or New Growth, we would encourage you to visit our websites at [www.wcmcaa.org](http://www.wcmcaa.org) or at [www.newgrowthmo.org](http://www.newgrowthmo.org). You can also give us a call at our central office by calling 660-476-2185 or sending us an email at [info@wcmcaa.org](mailto:info@wcmcaa.org) or [info@newgrowthmo.org](mailto:info@newgrowthmo.org).

**MOVING FORWARD**



***West Central Missouri Community Action Agency  
Annual Report Fiscal Year 2020***

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