

WASHINGTON COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION ORGANIZATION NEWS

Winter 1992

When the going gets tough...

"When you are willing to help yourself, others will help you - if you don't feel sorry for yourself and act like a victim." ~ Lisa Ruiz

Toledo, Ohio: a ghost town these days. Many companies relocating. Crime, unemployment.

A young family caught in a trap - Salvador Ruiz, his wife, Lisa, and their five children. "We were managing okay, until Salvador's son was diagnosed with a rare form of brain cancer," recalls Lisa.

Despite a lay-off in 1988 that cost Salvador his job as a machinist with Devilbiss (one of the companies that left Toledo that year), Lisa and Salvador were surviving. Lisa had established a janitorial business, that, despite the severe recession, was keeping food on their table. Salvador got odd jobs when they were available or helped out with Lisa's business if nothing else was going on. Then in July of 1990, they got the frightening news that Salvador's son was hospitalized and in critical condition.

"We literally lived at the hospital for the next four months," Salvador reminisces. "We lost the few janitorial contracts that we still had and, with the economy, we couldn't generate new accounts. We didn't have insurance to cover any of my son's hospital bills. We lost everything."

Salvador and Lisa made up their minds that if they wanted a better life - a chance to build back up what they had before - they had to leave Toledo. They started out for Oregon on December 1, 1991, with four of their five children. The oldest one, Aaron, stayed behind. They had saved up what they thought

was plenty of money to get them here and get them started. But their truck broke down many times on the way.

"Every hundred miles something



Salvador, Lisa and their youngest son, Alex, sit on the stairs of their new home, grateful for the chance to start over.

went wrong. We were concerned about money, so all six of us slept in the truck, if you can imagine that. We made it into an adventure," says Lisa. "Our kids have learned to appreciate hard times. They've learned to survive."

On December 12th, they finally arrived. "We stayed that night in the truck, and the next day I made at least 30 phone calls before we finally con-

nected with the WCCAO Shelter", recalls Lisa. "The Shelter was actually full, but our kids were sick from having to stay in the truck all this time, so they let us in."

"We were leary about going to the Shelter", adds Salvador. "We did it for our children. But we were pleasantly surprised. The staff were wonderful. They treated us with respect."

The Ruiz family got busy. The kids were enrolled in school right away, Salvador Ruiz began looking for a job as a machinist and Lisa signed up for WCCAO's Next Steps Program, part of the Self-Sufficiency Department. While they were at the Shelter, they helped out as much as they could. "It's astounding

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Board Chair's Message

Sherry Robinson

WCCAO is "off and running", and I believe 1992 brings a year of excitement, anticipation, anxiety and HARD work for Board Members, staff, clients and residents of Washington County. As a start to this year, I am giving over my "spot" in WCCAO's Newsletter to a valued Board Member who joined us in June 1990. Bob Brake shares with us a drive to keep WCCAO involved and active and has done a wonderful job of sharing his feelings about his role on the WCCAO Board. I want to share them with you.

Happiness is serving others : A Board Member's viewpoint by Robert Brake

Most of you probably have a clear idea of what WCCAO does to help feed, clothe, shelter and educate almost 50,000 residents. Some of you, however, may not have a clear idea of how WCCAO Board Members feel about their important duties and responsibilities. Why do we do it? What motivates us to spend so much time wrestling with poverty problems and trying to generate the huge resources needed to meet ever-growing problems in the County?

I'm a private sector representative and I spend much of my time teaching business courses at Concordia College, along with occasional marketing consulting projects. I attended one meeting of the WCCAO Board of Directors in April 1990 as the guest of a member. I was impressed by what I heard and saw and was invited to join the Board in June of that same year.

What I heard and observed that mo-

tivated me to become a part of the WCCAO team can be summarized in seven words, all ending in "ent". First, I am impressed by the commitment of the Board, staff and volunteers working with WCCAO, who really believe in the programs. They champion WCCAO, its programs and, most importantly, its clients. Their pride and enthusiasm almost make some of them what management expert Peter Drucker calls "monomaniacs with a mission".

Second, Board Members perceive their time and energy commitment as an investment — an investment in the future of Washington County and its residents.

Third, WCCAO Board Members try to be consistent in their efforts to develop effective strategies and tactics to meet the pressing problems of poverty. There's a serious effort to "Do It Right the First Time". I like that "DIRFT"

philosophy.

Fourth, Board Members are confident that what they do will make a difference. Working with limited resources and time constraints, they nevertheless strive always to produce outstanding programs that get results.

Fifth, Board Members are patient, a virtue required of everyone! They don't expect miracles or instant results. They do give their programs time to work, to penetrate the minds of many segments of the community that must be reached and persuaded to support WCCAO programs.

Sixth, WCCAO Board Members are aware that they're in a "please-and-thank-you" business and that it's important to say thanks to all who support WCCAO. They never forget the important word, subsequent.

Finally, WCCAO Board Members always attempt to employ an assortment of tools and techniques to meet the pressing poverty problems of the County. They don't "put all their eggs in one basket", but, rather, employ a diversity of programs to confront the serious problems of the less fortunate.

So you see, the reason I like being on the WCCAO Board is that I'm surrounded by optimists who demonstrate commitments and those other "ent" words. They would probably agree with former Secretary of Education John Gardner who observed that "we are all continually faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems."

We Board Members see opportunities where some see despair. And we see happiness in the prospect of seeking and

see "Board Chair" continued on page 8

WASHINGTON COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION ORGANIZATION

ACTION NEWS is the quarterly newsletter of the Washington County Community Action Organization (WCCAO), published by the WCCAO Administration, 451 S. First, Suite 700, Hillsboro, OR 97123. ACTION NEWS is coordinated by WCCAO staff member Pam Brown and is edited and designed by volunteer Alisa Corstorphine. (Please inform WCCAO of any address corrections.)

... People Helping People

The Washington County Community Action Organization (WCCAO) is a private, non-profit corporation providing a wide variety of services to the needy in Washington County, Oregon. Information on WCCAO programs is available from the following individuals:

WCCAO Administration (Jerralynn Ness, Executive Director)	648-6646
Client Services Dept. - Intake, Information & Referral	648-0829
Cheryl Hilbert, Director	648-6646
Heating Assistance (December - March)	640-8951
Neighborshare (Tigard, Tualatin, Sherwood)	639-0495
Child Development Dept. (Cathy Wise, Director)	648-6646
Housing & Energy Conservation Dept. (Leon Laptook, Director)	642-3236
Hunger & Transportation Dept. (Tom Caruso, Director)	642-3236
Resource Development Dept. (Pam Brown, Director)	648-6646
"Play It Again" Thrift Store	644-8956
Self-Sufficiency Dept. (Connie Sherrard, Manager)	648-8355



Executive Director's Message Jerralynn Ness

The good news is . . . the community cares

Five years ago when WCCAO developed its first strategic plan, we understood that homelessness was growing in Washington County. We knew that there was a great need for more shelter space, but we also knew that the solution to the problem wasn't to build more shelters. It was very clear that **the lack of affordable housing coupled with the lack of family wage jobs was the primary cause of homelessness in our community.** But we never dreamed that homelessness would literally explode.

In the past two years the number of homeless people who sought assistance from WCCAO has increased 270%. **Over 6,300 men, women & children - primarily families - became homeless in Washington County last year.** And six months into this fiscal year, the growth in homelessness continues, with the **demand for shelter twelve times greater than our capacity to serve.** It is a staggering situation - tragic for those who have become homeless and alarming for our community.

Over the past five years, WCCAO, along with others concerned, has responded to this growing problem by increasing shelter space, developing a continuum of homeless services and advocating for increased production of affordable housing. And over the past year it is beginning to feel like **the problems of housing and homelessness in Washington County have caught our broader community's concern and attention.**

I am encouraged when I see the Sunset Corridor Association and the Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce study the problem and ask how they can help. I am optimistic when I see the County appoint a dynamic new Housing Authority leader, Susan Wilson. I am

moved by the large numbers of community members who turn out to testify to the need at the County's hearings on its Comprehensive Housing Assistance Strategy. And I am inspired when our State Legislature, during difficult times, sees fit to invest in affordable housing and emergency housing assistance.

In this edition of our newsletter, you will meet one of the many families who found themselves homeless and turned to WCCAO for help. You will learn a bit more about the variety of services we offer to either prevent homelessness or to help families that become homeless, as well as to promote self-sufficiency and housing stability. You will meet a wonderful volunteer, Cathy King, who works every Saturday at the Shelter. There are many ways that you can become a part of the solution. Please give me a call if you'd like to become involved. ❖

"What's happening"

- **WCCAO Board of Directors** meets the third Wednesday of each month, 5:30 PM, Hillsboro Conference Room, 451 S. First, Suite 600; call Pilar, 648-6646, to confirm date, time and place.

- **Head Start Policy Council** meets the second Tuesday of each month (Sept. - June); contact Susan, 648-6646, for time and place.

- **Washington County Human Services Coalition** meets the second Friday of each month from 9:00 - 11:00 AM, WCCAO Hillsboro Conference Room, 451 S. First, Suite 600. Call Ron Dowd, 648-8881 to confirm date, time and place.

- **The Housing Development Corporation's Board of Directors** meets the 3rd Thursday every other month; next meetings are March 19, and May 21. Contact Diane Hess, 642-3236, to confirm date, time and place and for additional information.

- **6th Annual Mardi Gras to benefit WCCAO;** featuring auctions, dinner, Stumptown Jazz Band; Valley Conference Center, Saturday, February 22, 1992; attendance limited to 250; **SEE ENCLOSED ORDER FORM AND FLYER FOR MORE INFORMATION** ❖

*If you have provided for Washington County
Community Action Organization in your
estate plans, please let us know. If
not, let us show you how you can.*

*Please call or write:
Pamela Brown, Resource Development Director
Washington County Community Action Organization
451 South First Ave., Suite 700
Hillsboro, OR 97123
648-6646*

NEC America builds long term relationship with WCCAO

"NEC America was attracted to the Portland area for the quality of life here - the schools, the environment. We realize that quality of life doesn't happen all by itself. It requires active involvement from the community and that includes the corporate community."

Tim Weyer ~ Director - Personnel and Administration ~ NEC America, Inc., Oregon Plant

Located north of the Hillsboro Airport on Shute Road, NEC America has been manufacturing in Washington



NEC America's Hillsboro plant is one of only two of the company's manufacturing facilities in the U.S.

County since October 1985. Currently, 550 people work at NEC, a slight decline through attrition since last year. The company's major products are fiber optic transmission systems, cellular telephones, data modems and the VSAT (very small aperture terminal).

"NEC has a very definite philosophy of trying to be a good corporate citizen. Our corporate office in Melville, New York, encourages our support to the community", states Tim Weyer, Director of Personnel and Administration at the plant. NEC targets four areas for providing support: charitable, educational, cultural and community/civic. Though these are broad categories, NEC officials have determined 10-15 organizations that they want to work with,

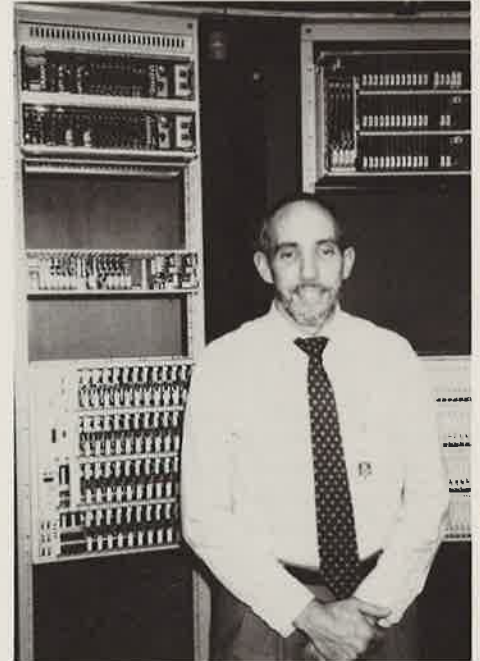
building a long term relationship, preferably increasing their support to each as their budget for contributions increases.

NEC isn't just interested in giving financial support. They encourage volunteerism from their employees and donate equipment when they find a need. In fact, NEC's first gift to WCCAO was a TV set that was raffled off to help support the Shelter. Since that time, WCCAO has received ongoing and increasing support from the company. This year's financial contribution was \$2,000 and, in addition, NEC sponsored two holes at the Hillsboro Sunrise Rotary Golf Tournament that benefitted the Shelter.

"For a long time, NEC didn't want to draw attention to the company through publicity about support that it gave to the community", explains Weyer. "We have tried to be actively involved in a very quiet way. But we have realized that if it helps the organizations draw more support from the community by drawing attention to our activities, then it is worth it to us to be more outspoken about what we do."

Support from NEC down the road may be more specifically targeted. A foundation for the company has just been established and their focus is being formulated at this time. In addition, NEC is aware of the growing need for affordable quality housing in Washington

County and is researching their options to address the problem. "350 out of the 550 jobs at NEC are production jobs", says Weyer. We hold Employee



Tim Weyer, NEC's Director of Personnel and Administration stands in front of a display of one of the products manufactured at the Oregon plant.

Roundtables every month so that our workers can talk about issues they have and make suggestions. We can't respond to all their needs at once, but we are trying to find a way to tackle the need for low income housing." ♦

Exorbitant application fees may block access to affordable housing

Paying first and last month's rent, deposits and application fees are making it nearly impossible for low income families to acquire housing. The actual cost of processing a rental application and obtaining a credit history is between \$25 and \$45. Repeated reports from clients and agencies in the Portland area indicate that **some landlords are charging as much as \$225 to qualify a poten-**

tial renter.

Washington County Community Action Organization, Clackamas County Community Action Program and Multnomah County Community Action Program Office are working together to gather evidence about exorbitant rental application fees in response to these reports. This research will provide a clearer sense of the problem and will provide

factual information for further work on this issue.

If you or someone you know has been charged over \$50 for a rental application fee, WCCAO wants to hear from you. Please write to Diane Hess, WCCAO Aloha Center, 20515 S.W. Blanton, Aloha, 97007 or call her at 642-3236. ♦

TwoHead Start teachers honored - sponsorship sought

WCCAO is proud to announce that two of the Head Start Center Coordinators, Donna Bennington and Carolyn Westlake, have been selected by the Citizen Ambassador Program of People to People International to visit Russia

They will have the opportunity to positively influence the educational opportunities for young children of Russia.

and meet with early childhood educators. May 8 - 22, 1992, the two women will join a delegation of 25-30 other Head Start Program Administrators and Educators from the U.S. to travel to St. Petersburg, Moscow and Warsaw.

Each year the Citizen Ambassador Program of People to People International develops a limited number of specialized teams to travel to countries throughout the world for the purpose of professional, scientific and technical exchanges. In their role as citizen ambassadors, Donna and Carolyn will represent their profession and help to further the ideals of People to People International, a non-political, private sector organization dedicated to promoting international understanding. People to People was founded in 1956 by President Eisenhower.

Donna and Carolyn were selected to be members of this delegation because of their exemplary backgrounds, experience and expertise. They will have the opportunity to positively influence the educational opportunities for young children of Russia. In order for them to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity, they will each need to raise \$5,000 to cover the costs involved.

WCCAO enthusiastically endorses their involvement and is seeking contributions from the community to sponsor them. **Any individual, business or organization interested in helping with sponsorship should contact Cathy Wise, WCCAO Child Development Director, at 648-6646.** ❖

When the going gets tough... continued from page 1

how welcomed we felt. Everyone wanted to help us make it. Felipe and Norma were great!"

Felipe Martinez, one of WCCAO's Next Steps Case Managers, helped arrange for the Ruiz family to move into a complex while they were on the waiting list for Section 8 Housing. Oregon Human Development Corporation (OHDC) agreed to help the Ruiz Family with their first month's rent at the complex.

Norma Gonzalez, Case Manager for Shelter Families, helped the Ruiz family connect with resources within WCCAO and through other agencies that would help them get through the next few months while they get back on their feet.

Lisa attends New Directions classes every day at PCC and has started up her janitorial business again on a small scale. She intends to find a way to pursue a

career more suited to her, but will clean houses and businesses until that is possible. Salvador is working for a temporary agency while he waits to hear about positions as a machinist. The couple go over to the Shelter if they have extra time to continue helping out there.

"We can't get over how wonderful everyone is out here" remarks Salvador. "From the gas station owner in Pendleton, who gave us enough gas to get the rest of the way to Portland, to the policeman here who donated a washing machine for us to use, to the people who come to the Shelter to donate their belongings. You wouldn't find that in Toledo."

"We hope to prove that their help is not in vain", vows Lisa. "We are going to be productive citizens that contribute to this community." ❖



TICKET ORDER FORM MARDI GRAS 1992

Washington County Community
Action Organization

February 22, 1992

6:00 — Midnight
Valley Conference Center



Please reserve _____ ticket(s) @ \$40.00 per person

Please contact me about sponsoring a patron table
@ \$500 (seats 10)

I am unable to attend, but I am enclosing a tax deductible
donation of \$ _____ to help WCCAO continue its work.

For information call 648-6646.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Mail reservations and make checks payable to:
Washington County Community Action Organization
451 S. First, Suite 700, Hillsboro, OR 97123

Phone reservations accepted with current VISA card.

THANK YOU!

You can help

Volunteers Needed:

- **Clerical work, word processing, data entry, reception;** call Pilar, 648-6646
- **Drivers, truck loaders for the Tualatin Valley Food Center;** call Vicki, 642-3236
- **Accurate typist** for Client Services; call Judy, 648-6646
- **Client reception work** call Judy, 648-6646
- **Information, referral and intake workers;** call Judy, 648-6646
- **Reception work, information and referral** at WCCAO's Neighborshare office in Tigard; call Carla, 639-0495
- **Sales Clerk** at WCCAO's thrift store; call Thelma, 644-8956
- **Outreach Workers** to Spanish and Southeast Asian speaking families; call Diane, 642-3236
- **Human Resources Specialist;** call Jerralynn, 648-6646
- **Mentor** for "Next Steps" Self-sufficiency Project clients; call Connie, 648-8355
- **Hispanic translator** for the Great Start Program; call Renee, 648-6646
- **Fundraising events helper;** call Denise, 642-3236
- **Child Care Volunteer** at the Shelter; call Michael or Melanie, 640-3263
- **Night/Day Supervisors** at the Shelter; call Michael, 640-3263
- **Interpreter for American Sign;** call Judy, 591-1647
- **Handyperson for Head Start Centers;** call Cathy, 648-6646
- **Sign Maker** for Head Start Centers; call Cathy, 648-6646
- **Electrical repair work** at Aloha Head Start Center; call Bill at 642-7279.
- **Child Care Assistant** for Parenting Classes; call Renee, 648-6646
- **Phone screener** to contact weatherization clients; call Joan, 642-3236
- **Kitchen Helper** for the Head Start Kitchen; call Phyl Cunningham-Bell at 640-5750
- **Carpenter/Woodworking** help at Head Start Center in Sherwood; call Joan at 625-6439

Donations Needed:

Equipment and Supplies: Computers, printers, color TV, VCR, coffee table for the waiting room, phone message

machine, table for the conference room, high quality 35mm camera with lenses for macro, zoom and/or wide-angle; call Pilar, 648-6646.

For Head Start Centers: large capacity food processor, 35mm camera, film and film developing, portable tape/CD players, TV with VCR built in, camcorder, wooden signs, old uniforms for dress-up corners, electric meat slicer, blenders, computers, printers; call

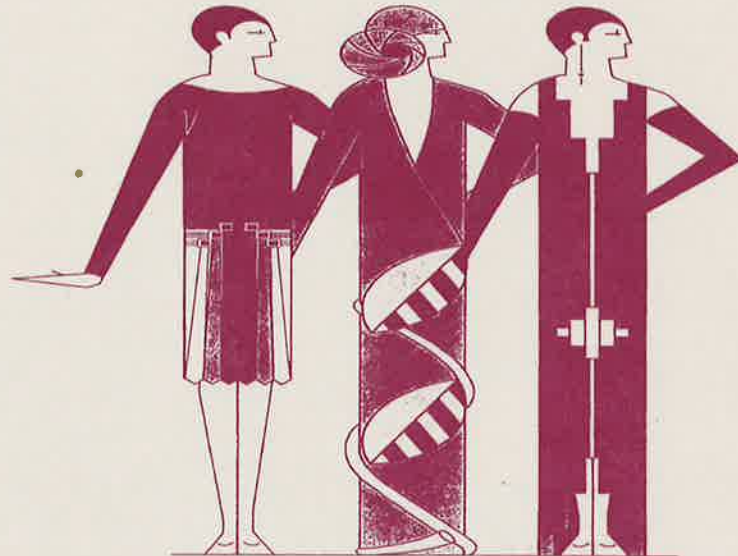
Cathy, 648-6646.

Furniture: Adopt a transitional house or a room in the house and furnish it; call Michael, 648-0829.

Food: Tualatin Valley Food Center is in need of high protein and staple food items, such as tuna, rice, pasta, canned fruits and vegetables; call Denise, 642-3236. ♦

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Bring in this ad for 10% off all merchandise!

Sponsored by and benefiting Washington County Community Action Organization (WCCAO). Volunteers needed, call for information.

Volunteering at the WCCAO shelter pays off

"If I even get low in my checkbook, I feel stress until I get my next pay check. I can't imagine being homeless, jobless, not knowing where or when the next money will come in. People here at the Shelter do very, very well considering the stress they are under. I respect what people here are going through."

Cathy King ~ Volunteer at the ~ WCCAO Family Shelter

Cathy King has a normal job 8 hours a day, 5 days a week as a systems manager at Intel. Somehow, that wasn't enough. "People at work are all the

I have stayed with it, even though some Saturday mornings I would just as soon stay in bed or do something besides come to the Shelter." She agreed that

Cathy performs general duties - monitoring the chores, handing out supplies, answering phone calls, giving out emergency food boxes, accepting donations.



Cathy King who has donated 1,300 hours so far helping homeless people in Washington County, responds to a call for help.

same. They are all like me. It was feeling like my life was one dimensional. Two and a half years ago I volunteered to be the United Way coordinator for my division. I toured the Shelter and have been volunteering here ever since."

she has not only just "showed up" every Saturday, but has also been effective, in that when she's there, people seem to feel at home.

"My pay-off", says Cathy, "is the kids. I love to be around kids and have become pretty attached to some of them."

While at the Shelter,

..."I think that there are two types of homeless families - those that are broke and those that are poor."

"Saturday is Refrigerator Day. We handle it like an old-fashioned quilting bee. Everyone has fun."

Her perspective on homelessness: "Since you ask, I'll tell you that I think that there are two types of homeless families - those that are broke and those that are poor. The broke families have had bad luck, have made bad decisions, but they have resources. The poor families have no resources and have very low self-esteem. The broke families have a lot better chance of making it."

Any final thoughts? "We can always use more volunteers. It's really a lot of fun. It's not a downer. It's an upper. But you need to be willing to stick around because there's a lot to learn. I am not altruistic about this. I'm doing it for myself." ♦



Handling emergency food boxes at the Shelter Home is only one of Cathy King's duties each and every Saturday.

"We can always use more volunteers. It's really a lot of fun. It's not a downer. It's an upper."

Volunteering to Cathy has meant a long term commitment. She has been at the Shelter every Saturday for the last two and a half years, working from 10:00 in the morning until 8:00 at night. "I have grown through my volunteer work.

WCCAO manages state emergency housing funds

WCCAO has been designated as the lead agency in Washington County for planning and administration of the State's Emergency Housing Account (EHA). The EHA, whose sole purpose is to assist homeless people and those people who are at risk of homelessness, is part of the larger Oregon Housing Fund created by the 1991 Legislature.

\$5 million will be distributed to community action programs around the State. Locally, in Washington County, WCCAO will be responsible for the use of \$307,000 of that \$5 million.

In order to plan for use of these new funds, WCCAO sponsored a series of public meetings in December to develop priorities for Washington County. Approximately 20 non-profit and public agencies sent representatives to the meetings and the group reached consensus on the following points:

1. Top priority for the funds should be programs providing emergency shel-

ter and attendant services.

2. Second priority should be programs that provide emergency home mortgage payments, rent, etc.

3. Preference should be given to:

- proposals which would stabilize existing services that have been proven effective.

- services that build self-sufficiency and lead to housing stability.

Based on these conclusions, WCCAO distributed a Request for Proposals for EHA funds. Proposals received by January 17, 1992, will be evaluated by a committee comprised of the Directors of Washington County Community Action Organization, the Virginia Garcia Clinic, Washington County Health & Human Services and the Washington County Housing Authority. This committee will make a recommendation to the WCCAO Board for final funding decisions.

It is estimated that award of the EHA funds will be made on March 1, 1992. The program will continue through June 30, 1993. For additional information, contact Leon Laptook, WCCAO's Director of Housing and Energy Conservation, at 642-3236. ♦

Board Chair's Message

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discovering ways to serve others. What better reasons to be with WCCAO? I love it and intend to do whatever I can to contribute to the alleviation or elimination of those problems that so adversely affect so many of our brethren in Washington County.

Thank you, Bob Brake, for committing a part of your time and energy to being a participant of the WCCAO Board of Directors.

To all WCCAO supporters a sincere wish for a peaceful and profitable 1992. ♦

Washington County Community Action Organization

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