



Summer 1996

Designate Your Donation

It's almost time for the annual United Way campaign to begin.

Three of Community Action's programs are supported by United Way funds: information and referral, the homeless family shelter, and emergency basic needs assistance.

You can help support these programs, too, by designating Community Action on your United Way form.



CONNECTIONS

A Quarterly Publication of Community Action Organization

It Takes a Whole Community

It is said that it takes a whole village to raise a child. In the case of a homeless family, help comes from a whole community.

Pregnant and with two small children, Zulma Lopez came to Portland late last fall to leave a bad situation in California. Staying with the only person she knew here, Zulma found a job she liked with an electronics assembly company. It wasn't long, however, before the manager of the apartment complex presented the two

families with an ultimatum: if Zulma didn't move, her friend would be evicted. Zulma took her children and left.

Diane had just turned three, Steven was eight months and Zulma was six months pregnant. Without a home or a place to leave the children while she worked, she had to quit her job. Spending three weeks at two different shelters, Zulma kept looking for a place to live, walking the streets with the children all day, carrying one baby and holding the hand of the other. Her friend's husband

offered to help out if she found an apartment, but because she had no rental history, no references and little money, nobody would rent to her. Zulma's last paycheck soon ran out. As the family sat on the steps of a church, one of the church volunteers offered to take her to the YWCA for food. Zulma says of these weeks, "I didn't know any-

Zulma and two of her children.



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Annual Golf Tournament Set

Polish your clubs and plan to join Hillsboro Sunrise Rotary's 6th annual celebrity golf tournament! A benefit for Community Action's homeless family shelter, the tournament will take place at Forest Hills Golf Course in Cornelius on September 13. Registration begins at 11:45 a.m. with foursomes meeting their celebrities for lunch. Tee-off will be at 1:15 p.m., and the day will end with a light buffet dinner and benefit auction of great items.

Participants have so much fun that they come back year after year to enjoy the fun, the prizes and the food - all for a good cause. For further information, call Scott Aldrich, chair of the event, at 648-4792.



Community Connections is the quarterly newsletter of Community Action Organization, 1001 SW Baseline St., Hillsboro, OR 97123, and is published by the Development Office and Yvette Dyer, volunteer.

Community Action Organization is a private, non-profit corporation providing a wide variety of services to the needy in Washington County, Oregon. For further information:

Administration: 648-6646
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Hillsboro 648-0829
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(Neighborshare)



Cindy Hirst
Board Chair

Message from the Board Chair and Executive Director



Jerralynn Ness
Executive Director

Over the past few months, we have been gathering information to increase our understanding of the demographics, issues and views of poverty in Washington County. We have heard from many sectors of our community, including low-income residents and key leaders. We would like to share with you some of what we are learning.

In our "Faces of Poverty" report which will soon be available to the public, we are reminded that over 38,000 people in Washington County are living on very low incomes, with over 20,000 of them living in poverty. Only about 20% of the households living in poverty receive welfare assistance and 65% have at least one employed family member.

In June, about 110 people shared their views and experiences at our four Dialogue on Poverty community meetings. Participants identified their top six issues to be addressed which are discussed in our Dialogue on Poverty story in this newsletter.

We have also conducted focus

groups and distributed surveys to determine our effectiveness in addressing the causes of poverty. We are now assembling the wealth of information we've received and will utilize it in our strategic planning process which began last spring and will be completed in early 1997. Board and staff members are looking at our vision for the county and how the agency's values and mission will fit that vision. We will be prioritizing our

work to focus on activities that have the greatest impact on poverty, using the strengths of our organization and the resources entrusted to us.

We believe that opportunities exist or can be created to assist low-income people to achieve self-determination and eventually move out of poverty. We are committed to assisting

our community to reduce the incidence and severity of poverty in Washington County. As always, your belief in and support of our efforts motivates us and allows us to continue to meet the challenges of our work. Many thanks.

"We will be prioritizing our work to focus on activities that have the greatest impact on poverty, using the strengths of our organization and the resources entrusted to us."

Dialogue on Poverty

Over 100 concerned community members gathered in June to discuss their ideas about poverty in Washington County. Community Action sponsored four dialogues, including one that was conducted in Spanish.

Participants were often emotional as they shared their personal experiences. Everyone had the opportunity to say what they feel is most important in order to reduce poverty. Issues considered top priority were:

- more safe and affordable housing
- more of people's basic needs being met
- more full-time jobs with good pay and benefits
- increased family capacity to solve problems effectively and nonviolently
- more people with basic skills in reading, math and communication
- increased quality, affordable child care and other support for working adults

Strategies for addressing these



Participants in a round-table discussion

issues were discussed as well and will be incorporated into our agency and community planning efforts. They will be combined with the

results of other dialogues nationwide in order to influence decision making at the state and national levels.



Play It Again Changes Hours

Play It Again, Community Action's free clothing and household goods store, has added Thursday mornings from 9:00–noon to its open hours. Other hours are

Tuesdays from 9:00–noon and Wednesdays from 9:00am–3:00pm. Currently the store is closed on Saturdays until more volunteers sign up. Donations will be gratefully accepted during the store's open hours. To volunteer for Saturday or any other day, call 693-3254.

Community Support Helps a Homeless Family

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one else here or where to go. I even lost my ID three times because I couldn't carry a purse and the babies, too."

She found out about Community Action's homeless family shelter when she went there to get donated clothing, and she immediately put herself on the waiting list. The day after she moved into the shelter, she was admitted to the hospital for a week, with bed rest ordered for the duration of her pregnancy. After being in and out of the hospital several more times, Zulma gave birth to daughter Shaddai on

January 15.

The community has supported the shelter in countless ways, including donations of money, labor, clothes and food. At the end of the Lopez family's stay, the community stepped in again in the form of Orenco Presbyterian Church which invited Zulma and her children to move into an empty house they had purchased. Scott Aldrich, a church member and organizer of the Hillsboro Sunrise Rotary Golf Tournament which benefits the shelter, oversaw the details. The church paid the rent and utilities, with neighbors and parishioners checking in on the family to make sure they had what they needed. In March, Zulma's Section 8 came through and she was able to

move her family to a three-bedroom apartment on the bus line. "People have been so nice to us, helping us and giving us things," Zulma says. She is now looking for child care so she can go back to her job at the electronics assembly company. "It's a good job," she says, "and they want me back."

Scores of other community groups and individuals have helped the shelter over the years, painting, cleaning, gardening, repairing, tutoring, collecting needed items and planning special events to help shelter residents feel less overwhelmed by their circumstances. As Zulma Lopez knows, it takes a community to help a homeless family.

Volunteers Recognized

At Community Action's annual meeting on June 19, five volunteers were recognized for outstanding service to the community. Carol Aldrich was honored for her organization of the Hillsboro Chamber Leadership workday at

the shelter; Mike Gieszler, a City of Hillsboro employee, received an award for designing and coordinating the construction of the children's play structure at the shelter. Theola Van Loo accepted an award for the Westco Emergency Fund, a group of West County churches which collects and provides emergency cash to people who have

exhausted all other resources. Lori Avalos was recognized for her efforts in helping the Neighbor-share office with its clerical backlog. Debbie Wetzler received an award for her many hours of service to the Head Start program. Community Action is fortunate to have the help of these and other such dedicated volunteers.

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