

Community Action Organization Celebrates Its 35th Year

Some thirty-five years ago, in response to Lyndon B. Johnson's "war on poverty," hundreds of private and public community action agencies were established under the Economic Opportunity Act to "eliminate the causes and conditions of poverty" in local communities.

"Community Action has taken on issues of poverty one family at a time," says Jerralynn Ness, executive director of Community Action Organization, which turns 35 in October of 2000. "We have successfully helped more than 12,000 economically disadvantaged families a year win battles over financial hardships and assist them on the road to self-sufficiency."

What began as a modest operation thirty-five years ago has grown into Washington County's leading provider of programs and services for the low-income population of Oregon's fastest growing and wealthiest county. Community Action remains best known for Head Start preschool, one of its original programs established in the late 1960's as a significant tool to break the cycle of poverty for young families. Between 1973 and 1985, CAO added community self-help programs, including a wood co-op and the nation's first agricultural gleaning program. In addition, CAO offered programs in energy assistance and weatherization, operated an extensive volunteer center, and purchased and operated a homeless shelter. In 1989, CAO opened its Neighborshare Office in Tigard, serving low-

income residents in the east part of Washington County.

In 1993 the community contributed \$3.3 million to CAO to fund the construction of a much-needed multi-purpose facility where CAO is now housed. The facility serves as a central office location for the agency and has been instrumental in improving service delivery. Clients now come to one location to receive information and assistance regarding housing, rent and utility assistance, access to weatherization programs, and referrals to services provided by other agencies.

Today Community Action operates programs and provides services at 27 sites throughout the county, including its newest programs, Opening Doors maternity outreach and A Kid's Domain, before and after school care. CAO programs rely on over 800 volunteers annually including those at Play It Again, a volunteer-operated clothes closet. A sampling of recent successes includes serving 33% more women during the first year of operating Opening Doors, teaching 34% more Head Start children, and creating and distributing the first comprehensive information and referral directory of social services available throughout the county.

"CAO has always responded positively to pressing community needs," says Ness. "The services we offer are publicly subsidized and require a significant commitment of private funding. Even with the support we receive



A Head Start student hard at play. Head Start is CAO's longest running program.

from corporations and friends, we've learned that we need to expand our efforts to increase private support and to continue to critically evaluate how we can best serve those in need at the lowest cost."

What will the next 35 years bring? "Increased collaboration among social service agencies and more partnerships with private funding sources to remain responsive to the needs of the growing population in Washington County," predicts Ness. "Because we work so closely with the community, we feel ready for the challenge."



Join Us For Our Anniversary Celebration!

The community is invited to participate in CAO's 35th birthday celebration activities. For more information phone 693-3230.

- **Summer Picnic on Fri., Aug. 25** at noon at the Hillsboro Shelter Home, 12th and Washington, Hillsboro. Recognizing the shelter's 25 years of service and honoring all CAO volunteers; featuring Mariachi music, barbecue and birthday pinata.
- **Fifth Annual Wine Raffle**, now until Sept. 21 when the winners will be announced at 6:00 p.m. at the CAO main office in Hillsboro. At this event we will recognize the Washington County Winery Association and feature a special birthday toast.
- **Business Forum**, Thurs., Oct. 26, 4 p.m., welcoming new members to the Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce and recognizing corporate support of CAO programs, at the main office in Hillsboro. Featuring the biggest birthday cake you've ever seen!



Ralph Brown
Board Chair

Community Action is 35 years young! This coming October marks a milestone for our agency as we celebrate three and a half decades of history with our partners throughout Washington County who have worked tirelessly to assist low-income families.

The year 2000 also marks the 25th birthday of our Hillsboro shelter home that began providing safe, temporary housing and support for homeless families in 1975. Each year the shelter serves more than 70 families, representing 275 individuals, half of whom are children.

WESTCO celebrates an anniversary this year as well. Non-profit organizations, churches, and individuals founded the WESTCO fund five years ago as a "safety net" fund which CAO distributes to low-income residents of Forest Grove and Cornelius in emergency situations. Hillsboro churches recently founded a similar fund for Hillsboro residents, modeled

after the WESTCO fund.

Over the years, CAO has offered these and many other programs to help our low-income neighbors, and each program has been successful because of community partnerships and volunteer efforts. In the coming months we want to thank everyone who has helped support our mission of assisting low-income families achieve self-determination (see celebration schedule on the front page) and bring more partners and volunteers into the fold.

We also want to brief each of our supporters on how Community Action is restructuring some of our programs to stabilize needed services for low-income families. We believe these changes will strengthen Community Action's position as we move ahead to our next 35 years allowing us to provide greater opportunities for low-income families to achieve a better life. We look forward to your continued support!



Jerralynn Ness
Executive Director

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Ornelas

**CAO Changes Lives
One Family at a Time**

Excerpts from a letter written
by a client—

"Karl and I came to you in December for assistance with our heating bill, and CAO graciously helped us. I particularly appreciated the way you valued me while I was there. I felt like you cared about our needs and really wanted to help us.

When our furnace was inspected it was determined that there was a large crack in it and it could have been potentially very dangerous. Within 2 weeks Community Action replaced our old furnace with a brand new gas furnace for free. WHAT A BLESSING FOR US! We're almost stunned by the generosity. We are very grateful. The heating works much better now. All the people who came to serve us were very nice and very professional. Thanks again for everything!"

**Energy Assistance
Program Gets
\$1 Million Boost**

CAO's Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) prevents utility shut offs, lowers fuel costs, and allows those in need to stay in their homes by providing financial assistance as well as comprehensive energy conservation education. Last year CAO was able to lower energy usage by an average of 10% in 141 households and to keep 728 families from losing their heat and utilities.

Despite these accomplishments, the demand for assistance has always been greater than available funding. Recognizing the unstable nature of funding for LIEAP, Oregon legislators passed Senate Bill 1149 into law in the summer of 1999 to increase funding for energy assistance.

Community Action Organization will receive \$1 million to distribute to low-income families in Washington County who need energy assistance to stay warm and keep their utilities running.

Many thanks to Representatives Bill Witt, Ryan Deckert and Ken Strobeck for their support of this bill and the low income protections.



**Meyer Trust Awards
\$250,000 for CAO
Advancement**

The Meyer Memorial Trust has granted Community Action Organization a \$250,000 grant over three years to invest in the agency's development program in order to increase private contributions from the community for core services. The funds will help implement a commissioned development plan that emphasizes cultivating major donors and stepping up community relations efforts to better educate the community about CAO.

"Like the clients we serve, CAO struggles to make ends meet," says Margaret Eickmann, CAO board member and chair of its resource development committee that submitted the grant. "This funding will help us build our capacity to better help ourselves help others. We need more private support for our programs and increased involvement of our community if we are to continue to be successful."

The grant will fund the staff and programs needed to build relationships that will result in more support of the critically-needed services CAO provides to the growing low-income population of Washington County.



Community Spirit Dinner a Success!



CAO Opening Doors VISTA Coordinator, Tammy Mace, NPR "Talk of the Nation" host Juan Williams, CAO Executive Director Jerralynn Ness, National Association of Community Action Agency president, Lois Carson

The 3rd Annual "Celebration of Community Spirit Dinner" raised \$46,000 this year to support CAO programs. Nearly 200 people, representing over 30 companies, gathered at the Greenwood Inn on April 14th to show their support for Community Action Organization.

Guests enjoyed wine provided by the Washington County Winery Association and Sake cocktails mixed by Sake One. Featured speakers included NPR's Talk of the Nation host, Juan Williams, a long-time friend of community action agencies, and Tammy Mace, a former CAO client who now supervises VISTAs for CAO's Opening Doors program. Dick Stenson of Tuality Healthcare/Health Alliance, and Henningsen Cold Storage received Community Spirit Awards.

Thank you to all of our sponsors for making this event a huge success!

Encore! Encore!
Tualatin Valley Cable Access (TVCA) videotaped the dinner speakers. Call TVCA at 629-8534 x107 for show times.



CAO Executive Director Jerralynn Ness, Mayor of Cornelius Ralph Brown, CAO Community Spirit Award recipient Henningsen Cold Storage, Mike Henningsen, Jr., Jim Bell, Chris Henningsen, Mike Henningsen, Sr., and Paul Henningsen.



Community Spirit Award recipient Dick Stenson with James Draznin and Lorley French.

"...this whole process of change and growth had to start with me....."
Tammy Mace, Former Client
CAO Opening Doors VISTA Volunteer



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Community Connections

Community Connections
is a newsletter of
Community Action Organization
1001 SW Baseline St.,
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In partnership with the community,
Community Action assists low
income people to achieve
self-determination.

Community Action Organization is
a private, non-profit corporation.

For further information contact:
Resource Development: 693-3230

**Community Action Organization
5th Annual Wine Raffle Tickets
Now on Sale at CAO's Hillsboro office**

TICKETS
\$2⁰⁰ EACH



AVAILABLE
NOW!

GRAND PRIZE


6 Cases of Premium Washington County Wine &
3 Cases of Momokawa Saké

10 Additional Prizes

3 Cases of Premium Washington County Wine &
1 Case of Momokawa Saké

Proceeds directly benefit programs serving low-income families.

Wine provided by:


Cooper Mountain Vineyards
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Drawing: Sept.. 21, 2000 - 6:00 pm at Community Action Organization
1001 SW Baseline St. Hillsboro, Oregon (503) 693-3230

Need not be present to win.