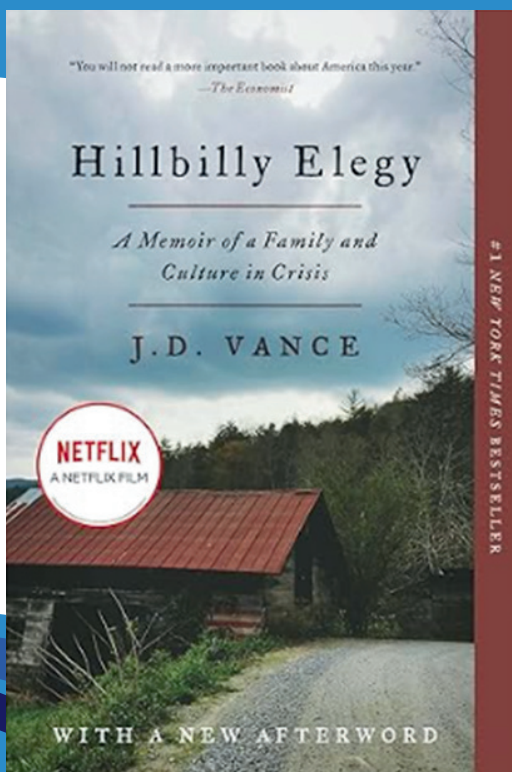


EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

February
2025



Lisa's Book Corner



This Month's Spotlight: Hillbilly Elegy

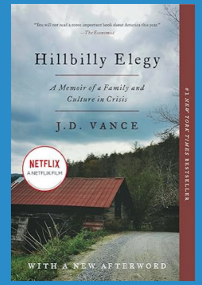
*Learn more about the book
and some highlights on the
next page!*

READ MORE





Lisa's Book Corner



Those of you who have been around long enough will know this is my second book report on Hillbilly Elegy, written by the Vice President, J.D. Vance. Because of his new leadership role, I decided to read it again. What I have appreciated about this book is that it details his upbringing in poverty from a rural, white perspective. While yet valuable, many books on this topic are based on urban poverty.

In the snip below, he's referring to the sentiment and mindset of the people that he grew up around. What caught my attention the most was the idea that people tend to blame this mindset on the government. All of us can think of someone who behaves this way. We see this at times among our staff.

People with an external locus of control tend to believe that their successes or failures are primarily determined by external factors beyond their control, such as fate, luck, or the influence of other people. It can be especially common among those who face chronic adversity and trauma survivors.

JD Vance:

Here is where the rhetoric of modern conservatives (and I say this as one of them) fails to meet the real challenges of their biggest constituents. Instead of encouraging engagement, conservatives increasingly foment the kind of detachment that has sapped the ambition of so many of my peers.What separates the successful from the unsuccessful are the expectations that they had for their own lives. Yet the message of the right is increasingly: It's not your fault that you're a loser; it's the government's fault. (PG 194)

It was refreshing to read his understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), especially incorporating his own experiences. In this quote he emphasizes the importance of family stability.

As sociologists Paula Fornby and Andrew Cherlin found, a "growing body of literature suggests that children who experience multiple transitions in family structure may fare worse developmentally than children raised in stable two-parent families and perhaps even than children raised in stable, single-parent families." (PG 229)

He talks about Section 8 housing vouchers and how they are administered, *"..we'd recognize that Section 8 vouchers ought to be administered in a way that doesn't segregate the poor into little enclaves."* (245)

As a mother of two sons who has relentlessly dogged them to perform academically, his idea below resonates, especially in our rural area and where universally, so many of our pre-K to 12 educators are women.

"As a child, I associated accomplishments in school with femininity. Studies show that working-class boys like me do much worse in school because they view schoolwork as a feminine endeavor." (245-246)

Overall, this again was a good quick second read for me. I am told there is a Netflix movie of the same title – in case you're more of a movie watcher, but I tend to find the movie done on a book often leaves too much out and never does it justice! I appreciated his story, but one hang up – JD is an Ohio State graduate!

All kidding aside, having someone at the highest rungs of power in our country who has experienced poverty firsthand is important. I hope he is able to bring the voice of the poor into the room.

Program Impact

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Open Enrollment for Medicare Advantage Runs January 1 through March 31

If assistance in choosing a plan is needed, call (800) 803-7174. Note: Due to contract negotiations between local hospitals and the MA Plans, there are limited MA Plans accepted in 2025. Beneficiaries may find that their doctors, specialists and other service providers may follow suit with the local hospital and accept/not accept certain plans. Humana and Aetna Advantage Plans are no longer available in our area.

MMA News: As of March 1, the Michigan Medicare Assistance Program (MMA) and MMA, Inc., as we know it, will cease to exist. MMA is what Michigan called its long-standing State Health Insurance Program (SHIP). Most other states simply refer to the program as SHIP. The SHIP will be rerouted to operate under the state's new No Wrong Door initiative. Under the No Wrong Door, conflict free long term care Options Counseling and SHIP services will be offered. NEMCSA's Area Agency on Aging has applied for this funding in hopes of continuing the important SHIP and new Options Counseling within the region. Awards are to be announced by early February.

OAA Reauthorization still needed

In December, Congress passed an end-of-the-year legislative package that includes a short-term continuing resolution (CR) that extends Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations levels through March 14, 2025. The bill provided authorization and funding for the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) funding for SHIPs, AAAs and ADRCs through March 2025.

Unfortunately, the bill did not include reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA). OAA provides funding for programs such as in-home services, home delivered meals, and caregiver support services. The temporary funding bill keeps funding for OAA programs and services safe until March 14, but this does not mean the funding will continue to be preserved in the remainder of the fiscal year. It will depend on what the 119th Congress decides to do.

Much of the 2025 legislative outlook remains uncertain, but what is certain is that advocacy will be needed! Relationships with new and returning members of Congress and their staffers must be formed to ensure older adults are protected and prioritized. If the OAA programs are important to you or an older adult you know, please let your federal legislators know.



CAREGIVER LUNCHEON EVENT
Thursday, May 15, 2025
11:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Saginaw Tribal Center
5447 Sturman Rd
Standish, MI 48658

30% of Michigan adults over the age of 50 are providing care. This caregiving comes with emotional, physical, and financial burdens.

Why Join Us:

- Expert Speakers
- Get to know the Resources in your Community
- Complimentary Lunch
- Local Vendors
- Great Prizes and Giveaways!

(989) 358-4616 mainville@nemcsa.org www.nemcsa.org

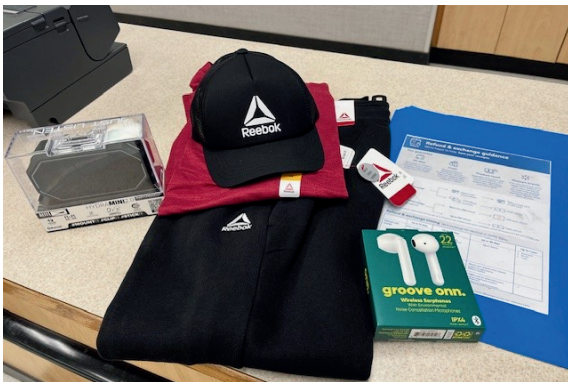
Older adults with dementia can easily become bored because they aren't able to do the things they once did, like engage in a conversation or read a magazine. They may also be confused by unfamiliar surroundings, making them anxious or agitated. That can make sitting in a waiting room or traveling difficult. One way to make these kinds of things less challenging is to bring an activity bag along for the senior. The Roscommon County Commission on Aging and the NEMCSA-Region 9 Area on Aging have partnered together to provide activity bags to caregivers at NO COST.

These can be picked up at RCCOA 1015 Short Drive, Suite A. Prudenville, MI 48651. Please feel free to call for any questions 989-279-0850 ext. 1108

The AAA is very pleased to announce a joint project with the Saginaw District of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan. The Caregiver Luncheon will increase awareness of caregiver services as well as other community resources available in the region. The event is open to tribal members and the public.

Program Impact

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES



Staff Wellness
Spreading
Holiday Cheer!



The 2B staff decided to use some of their staff wellness funds for a charity during the holiday season. The area manager connected with leadership and was given the green light to find a holiday charity. Staff chose the Angel Tree (that was located in a local Wal-Mart). Staff chose to pick an older child on the tree as they often get overlooked. They picked a 14 year old boy. His needs were clothing so they picked a nice outfit and his wants were a PlayStation 5 (Obviously that wasn't in the budget!). Staff put their mom brains together and thought, "What do the teen boys like right now?" They settled on some earbuds and a Bluetooth speaker. The staff wellness money is usually spent on a "pick me up" for staff and they decided this was more important than lunch or a craft or experience for them -- it brought staff together during the holiday season and they all felt great about helping a local child.



As President of the MHSA, Tricia opens the Winter Assembly and Elections at the MHSA meeting in Detroit.

Building Teams & Graham Cracker Towers

Staff in areas 2E and 2G joined together for a staff meeting in December. They were grouped up to do a team bonding to create the highest tower using graham crackers, marshmallows, and frosting. West Branch and Mio Elementary created the highest tower.



TEAM UP!





NEMCSA's Family Fun Night offers activities, resources

Take a look at
these articles!



Articles from The Alpena News Focused on Early Childhood

The first article covers a "Family Fun Night" that featured a variety of activities for children and their families. This event also provided an opportunity for locals to discover more about the programs available in the community.

The second article emphasizes the difference between interim-managed programs and long-standing providers of Head Start Programs. These programs have played a vital role in empowering families and positively influencing their education, health, and parental engagement for nearly 60 years.

Reaffirming Head Start integrity

A Thursday editorial in The News written by the Wall Street Journal, "Programs at Head Start negligent, mismanaged," overlooks the important distinction between interim-managed programs and long-standing providers like the Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (NEMCSA).



LISA BOLEN
Northeast Michigan
Community Service
Agency

Interim management is a rare emergency measure triggered by serious issues like health and safety concerns or fiscal mismanagement. It aims to stabilize services and minimize disruptions for children and families. Once re-established, the grant is transitioned to a permanent community-based organization.

That rare intervention does not reflect the success of stable, well-established programs like NEMCSA.

For more than 55 years, NEMCSA has provided high-quality early education, health services, and family support to thousands of children in Northeast Michigan. This past year alone, 799 children transitioned to kindergarten healthier, better prepared, and more confident because of Head Start. Nearly 100% received essential medical screenings, immunizations, and developmental support, ensuring they were ready to learn. Families also benefited,

with more than 1,300 receiving critical assistance for housing, employment, and other basic needs.

In rural areas, Head Start is more than a preschool — it is a lifeline for families, a hub of resources, and a catalyst for success. NEMCSA operates with a 4% administrative rate, meaning the vast majority of funding goes directly to serving children and families. Our commitment to quality and accountability is unwavering.

Over the past 60 years, Head Start has served more than 37 million children, many of whom have faced significant barriers to success.

Decades of research and countless personal stories highlight how the program has empowered families, improved school readiness, and strengthened entire communities — often operating on limited resources.

Key impacts of Head Start include:

■ **Educational gains:** Longitudinal studies show that Head Start alumni are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and achieve higher earnings compared to peers who did not participate in the program.

■ **Health outcomes:** Head Start plays a crucial role in early screenings for vision, hearing, and developmental delays, identifying and addressing health concerns that, if left untreated, could hinder a child's growth, learning, and long-term success.

■ **Parental engagement:** The program fosters strong family involvement, encouraging parents to take an active role in their child's education. Through program governance, parents gain valuable experience in policymaking and

budget management, skills that extend beyond the classroom and into their communities.

However, the full impact Head Start programs have in local communities cannot be measured.

Helping our youngest community members be active and engaged learners is some of the most important work NEMCSA does. Setting students off on the right foot as they begin their educational journey is so important, as it provides them with the tools to become successful adults and community members.

Since 1965, Head Start has been a pillar of early childhood education in the United States, providing comprehensive support to low-income children and families. More than just academic preparation, Head Start offers a holistic model of services unmatched by any other program. By addressing the many factors that influence a child's success, it lays a solid foundation for lifelong learning and development.

Head Start works. It changes lives. And, in Northeast Michigan, NEMCSA will continue delivering the highest standards of education and care to our youngest learners, ensuring a brighter future for them and our communities.

Lisa Bolen is the executive director of the Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency, driving a team of nearly 750 dedicated employees and managing a dynamic, \$70 million budget to uplift rural Michigan communities. A fierce advocate for Northeast Michigan, she is a bold leader in local government, education, and regional initiatives, relentlessly championing community development and transformative services.

Program Impact

BRIDGES OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

BOSS Program Success Stories

The BOSS Program continues to support and empower participants to achieve incredible milestones! Here are some recent wins:

- A homeless family secured housing and increased work hours.
- 4 participants transitioned to as-needed support.
- One participant moved into a new apartment.
- A participant became resourceful using cash-back apps for monthly expenses.
- One participant has a job interview for a receptionist position at a major hospital.
- A participant passed their CDL test.
- Another participant enrolled in a budgeting class.
- A participant launched an in-home baking business.
- One participant passed their final college courses and is preparing for clinical validation—an incredible milestone!
- A participant secured a part-time holiday job and is planning to launch a business in the new year.



This project was supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRF4951 awarded to The State of Michigan by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES



A NEMCSA Podcast

NEMCSA is beyond excited to introduce Empower & Strengthen, a podcast designed to inspire, inform, and empower individuals and families in Michigan. Hosted by Amanda and Madison, this podcast highlights the incredible work happening at NEMCSA, sharing stories of resilience, valuable resources, and actionable tips for making a difference.

Episode 1 is Live!

Our first episode, "Welcome to Empower & Strengthen: NEMCSA's Mission in Action," features:

- **Lisa Bolen**, CEO of NEMCSA, shares her history & vision for the agency
- Staff from the **Aging Division**, discussing upcoming resources and events
- Leadership from the **Volunteer Programs** on how YOU can get involved

Whether you're a community member, volunteer, or someone looking for support, this podcast has something for everyone!

Listen now and be inspired: [Listen Here!](#)

💡 **Have ideas or want to join as a guest?**

Share your suggestions, topics, or feedback by completing the form here:

[Podcast Feedback Form](#)



CRC@NEMCSA.ORG



989-358-4757

In December, the CRC team provided support to 115 individuals, including 33 contacts from the CRC shared line.

Program Impact

SCHOOL SUCCESS



School Success partnered with local law enforcement and Alpena Walmart for the "Shop with a Cop" event, providing a fun night for kids and families. Walmart donated gifts, food, and even had Santa and Mrs. Claus present. School Success arranged haircuts and transportation for families. Thank you to all that made this event possible!

Another great addition to the many things SSP does over the holidays:

Christmas Family Night at Hale Elementary School that was very well attended. With the help of staff volunteers, SSP, and all the custodial staff, it was made into a magical night for families close to Christmas. There were many arts and craft stations set up, all making ornaments, cards, and even decorating cookies to eat! The Hot Chocolate Bar was also a hit! Staff really loved working this event and seeing all the children and families attend, eyes lighting up, and bringing some Holiday Cheer! There was even Santa!



The School Success Program (SSP), with the support of community partners, was able to provide hundreds of holiday gifts. Additionally, through partnerships, the program has provided clothing, food, gas and financial solutions to numerous families over the holidays. Overall, SSP Liaisons provided mental wellness support to navigate the holiday season and the stressors for kids and families as it is not always a joyful time for all families. This year all schools were closed for 2 weeks so it is important for School Success Liaisons to anticipate and prepare for family needs while their students are not in school daily.

Support Provided to Students and Families:

- **Gifts and Toys:** A variety of gifts, including toys and art supplies, were provided to students to ensure a happy holiday season.
- **Safety, Emotional and Wellness Support:** Holiday break safety planning and meeting immediate needs for families in crisis.
- **Food Assistance:** Food boxes and grocery gift cards from donors were distributed to help families during the holiday breaks, alleviating food insecurity.
- **Gift Packaging:** In many areas, gifts were distributed in reusable Christmas bags, replacing traditional black garbage bags, to add a more personal touch to the holiday spirit. SSP Liaisons and volunteers help with shopping, wrapping and distribution.
- **Clothing:** Winter clothing, including outfits, snow gear, shoes, and boots, were provided to ensure students have the proper attire for the cold weather.

School Success Staff are the catalyst in making this all possible with the support of community donors, charitable organizations, community churches, local businesses, law enforcement, local credit unions, other NEMCSA programs/GAP funding, school personnel and student volunteers that devote their time and money to making the holiday season bright for students and families in their communities.

Program Impact

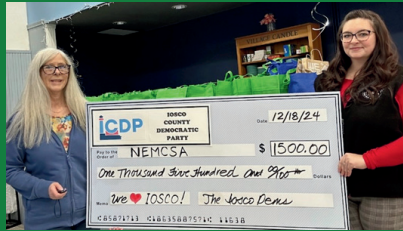
THANK YOU SO MUCH!

Thank you, Hunter's Harvest, for your \$1,500 donation to our Homeless Awareness Month. The program will use these funds to purchase move in baskets for those that are moving into their own apartments!



Thank you, DTE, for donating 10 "EMPWR COATS" to NEMCSA's homeless program from the Empowerment Plan Project in Detroit. These innovative, weather-resistant coats can transform into sleeping bags and be worn as shoulder bags. Staff are excited to distribute them, especially in the current frigid temperatures.

Thank you, Iosco County Democratic Party, for the generous donations! They provided a \$1,500 monetary donation and bags containing items purchased for 15 Iosco County households!



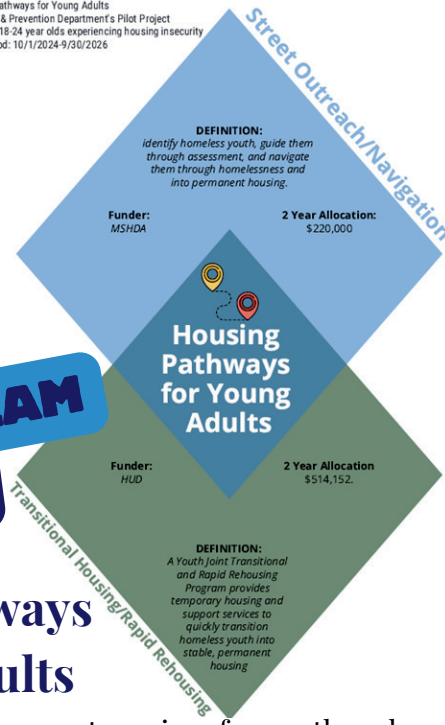
HOUSING

NEW PROGRAM ALERT!

Housing Pathways for Young Adults

- Housing and case management services for youth and young adults ages 18-24 who are experiencing homelessness
- Rental Assistance:
 - Transitional Housing: short-term housing with supportive services
 - Rapid Rehousing assistance: permanent stable housing
- Case Management and Street Outreach: life skills, job searching, housing applications, community resource referrals, assist with gathering identification documents
- FYI (Foster Youth to Independence) Vouchers issued by MSHDA: up to 36 months of rental assistance for youth who exited or will be exiting the foster care system within 90 days.

Housing Pathways for Young Adults
Homeless & Prevention Department's Pilot Project
Eligibility: 18-24 year olds experiencing housing insecurity
Grant period: 10/1/2024-9/30/2026



Homeless Awareness Month, affectionately known as HAM by the team brought together the community to promote making a difference in the lives of those experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. This year's theme "Destination Home: Sharing the Common Goal of Housing for All" proved advantageous to the efforts of the community in raising awareness and spreading kindness. In total, Homeless & Prevention raised over \$4,000 in monetary donations, as well as a substantial supply of basic hygiene and household products. Street Outreach staff will use the donated items to assist those living in places not meant for human habitation to meet daily needs while they work to locate permanent housing. Case management staff put welcome home baskets together to provide supplies to those moving into new housing with the household cleaners and toiletries provided from the donations. Thank you to the communities and to every church, library, and business that hosted a box for the entire month of November!



To find out more about Homeless & Prevention Services, call: 989-358-4678.

Program Impact

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

In the months of December and January, staff completed Rental Counseling with 3 different households that ended their homelessness through the Homeless and Prevention Program. These counseling sessions are used to make sure they will be able to maintain housing on their own and not end up homeless again.

Six households completed Homebuyer Education and 5 of those households also participated in Pre-Purchase Counseling. Of the households that completed Pre-Purchase, 2 are within weeks of closing on their homes while the other 3 plan to close in February as long as the process keeps moving smoothly for them.

The Family Self-Sufficiency Program currently has 24 active participants. This number is always changing as new people are enrolling or people deciding that they don't have to participate and are exiting.

HOMEBUYER EDUCATION

START YOUR JOURNEY TO BECOMING A HOMEOWNER TODAY!

TOPICS COVERED INCLUDE:

- IS BUYING A HOME RIGHT FOR YOU?
- DETERMINING AFFORDABILITY
- DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE
- THE HOME BUYING PROCESS
- BASIC HOME MAINTENANCE

Join us in-person!
Saturday January 25th, 10-2pm at the
NEMCSA Head Start Office
825 2nd Street, Tawas



To sign up for the free class scan the QR
Code or call: 989-358-4653.



**To find out more about the
Financial Empowerment
Programs, Call: 989-358-4627.**

WATER PROGRAM

**In December & January,
The Water Affordability Program
successfully provided assistance to:**

104

HOUSEHOLDS



165

ADULTS



132

**CHILDREN
UNDER 18**



47

SENIORS



To find out more about the Water Program, Call: 989-358-4675.

Program Impact

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

Foster Grandparent/ Senior Companions

Program staff's recruiting efforts continue to pay off! They have enrolled two new Foster Grandparents and two Senior Companions in December along with three new Senior Companions in January. Pictured from left to right are Senior Companions Dorothy Mirasolo, Diane Macreno, Project Director Heidi Powers and Foster Grandparents DeAnn Gardyszewski and Ted Rafferty. All four represent Iosco County. Not pictured are new volunteers Alice Hiler and Ruth Ormsbee from Gaylord and Mary Anticiff from Roscommon. Staff are very excited about expanding program ranks and fortifying its impact in the new counties of Otsego and Roscommon. In all, the program recruited 12 new volunteers in 3 months!



Amy Cook Otto and Heidi Powers met with Bradley Somers at WBKB for Talk of the Town. Both gave information about the AmeriCorps Senior Volunteer Programs of Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion and RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) wanting to get the word out to the surrounding communities of what is available for seniors to do.

RSVP

This year for Martin Luther King Day, the Volunteer Programs decided to collect items for hygiene products to be distributed during the annual PIT count. Staff members went to the local community businesses requesting donations either in monetary form or in the form of hygiene products and then asked volunteers to come to help place the items in bags to be handed out at the end of January to the homeless.

- 211
- Alpena/Houghton Lake Walmart
- Alpena Meijer
- Alpena Salvation Army
- Cheboygan Angels Wear House
- Roscommon United Way
- Crawford County River House Inc.

Staff along with volunteers were able to pack over 100 hygiene bags with items such as, toothbrush/toothpaste, sock, scarves, gloves, hats, washcloths, hand towels, soap, and shampoo. Without the generosity of our local businesses, and the volunteers not only packing but the ones helping during the pit count, these bags would not get to those that need them.



FY 2024 Stats

302 Volunteers

75 Volunteer Stations

41,000 Hours Served

Hours Served Valued at \$1,403,783