



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

May
2023

From the desk of Executive Director, Lisa Bolen.

I have the privilege of being able to sit on an advisory group with our auditors, Wipfli. The group is comprised of Federally Funded Human Service Program Leaders, and most are Community Action Executive Directors, like me. States represented in the group are Arkansas, California, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, and Utah. As described by Wipfli "The mission of the Wipfli Federally Funded Human Services Client Advisory Board is to bring together an exclusive group of federally funded Community Action, Head Start, and Aging program leaders, who together with Wipfli, will explore new and unique strategies to help them thrive and better serve their communities while dealing with structural, financial, and operations issues and opportunities."

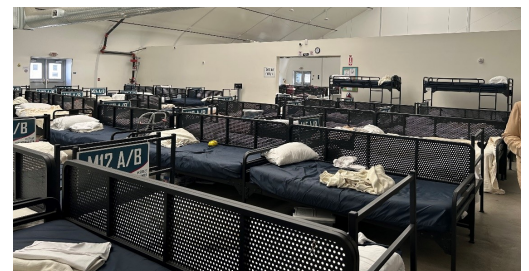
I appreciate that I have had the opportunity to sit with this group of experts and that you have supported my time in doing so. During my recent trip to California, the group was able to visit two large Community Action Agencies – Options for Learning in Covina and Community Action Partnership of Kern, headquartered in Bakersfield.



During the visits, we were able to pack food boxes at CAPK's food bank warehouse and tour two Head Start centers at Options for Learning. Most humbling, we visited the M Street Navigation Center for homeless individuals. The 24-hour center provides shelter beds, laundry, medical assessments, and pet kennels..

<https://www.capk.org/m-street-navigation-center/>

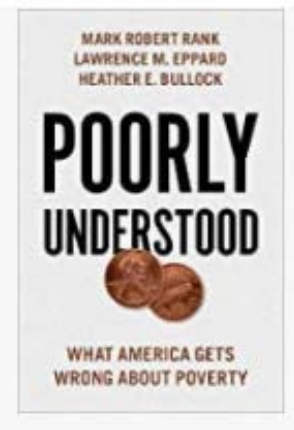
My key takeaways - California has very significant homeless problems. However, they seem to be doing a better job of meeting childcare needs than we are here in Michigan. I will be tapping into an expert from Options for Learning to contrast California's model with Michigan's model. This will allow for informed policy recommendations to be made that ultimately end up on the Develop losco and NEM<COG grant findings.



Enhancing quality of life by empowering individuals and strengthening communities.

The book "Poorly Understood" challenges you to think that what you know about poverty is probably wrong. The Washington Post provided a good overview of the book, which can be read here: https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/what-you-think-you-know-about-poverty-is-probably-wrong/2021/03/17/a92287fe-7a96-11eb-85cd-9b7fa90c8873_story.html

To read the book itself, it is available in audio on Hoopla, a web and mobile library media streaming platform that is provided for FREE by many local library branches including the Iosco-Arenac District Library!



COMMENTARY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2023

Michigan's early childhood system is letting women down

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Michigan's early childhood system is letting women down.

Insufficient state funding for providers, poor compensation for workers, and high costs for families harm both early childhood workers — 96% of whom are women — and moms who can't return to the workforce without affordable and reliable child care.

Even as labor force participation rates are beginning to reach and surpass pre-coronavirus-pandemic levels, moms face unique disadvantages. While women generally are less likely than men to be employed or looking for work, parenthood exacerbates those differences. Moms with children younger than 5 are 26% less likely to be in the labor force than dads with children in the same age range.

And, when they are working, they aren't paid as much. Equal Pay Day for women — the day when women catch up to what men earned in the previous year — already flew by this year on March 14, but Moms' Equal Pay Day won't arrive until September, marking how much longer employed moms have to work to catch up to what dads made last year.

The wage gap costs full-time working moms \$17,000 annually, but Black moms are losing roughly twice as much. With an extra \$17,000, Michigan moms could pay for nearly two whole years of child care.



ANNE KUHNEN
Michigan League for
Public Policy

Lack of investment in child care doesn't just harm women with young children. It also harms the 22,540 workers — nearly one in four of whom are women of color — who provide care. Those are women who are well-trained — the majority have bachelor's degrees — but for whom higher education and training does not translate to higher wages.

The median wage for child care workers was \$11.13 in 2019, placing them among the lowest-wage earners in Michigan. Despite high levels of qualifications among early childhood workers, one in five lives in poverty. It is therefore no surprise the sector has high turnover and is currently experiencing shortages, having lost nearly 20% of its workforce compared to pre-pandemic levels.

A quality workforce demands quality wages. Child care workers in Michigan take home just \$25,580 on average annually, less than half what kindergarten and elementary teachers earn. As workers achieve higher qualifications, the wage penalty for remaining in early childhood increases compared to other career paths.

Michigan needs competitive, cross-sector wage scales both to improve recruitment and retention in the field and to account for the value of the work. The governor's proposal to create a refundable Child Care Educators Income Tax Credit of up to \$3,000 is a good start for addressing the immediate problem, but we must go further to ensure workers are fairly compensated and have financial security.

But, importantly, as Michigan seeks to improve pay for early childhood workers, it must not do so on the backs of working families.

Families earning less than 200%

of the federal poverty level, about \$55,500 for a family of four, can qualify for child care subsidies. However, less than one in six income-eligible children younger than 5 actually receives a child care subsidy.

Even fewer eligible families are able to benefit from subsidies in some counties — including Alcona (5%), Alpena (15%), Montmorency (9%), and Presque Isle (12%) counties — due to barriers like burdensome applications, unavailability of care during nontraditional hours, and limited spots compared to the number of families seeking care.

An additional barrier comes from the subsidies themselves, which require all available caregivers to be engaged in an approved activity — like work or school — to qualify, but many parents need reliable child care before they can secure employment. That creates a catch-22 for all families, but is especially acute for single moms, who head one in four households with children in Michigan.

While men are also harmed by barriers to affordable child care, a recent Pew Research Center report shows that, even in opposite-sex households, where wives are the primary earner, they still do more of the caregiving work.

So, if we want to make Michigan the best place to have a baby, we need to be building a child care system that works for families and meets the needs of working women.

Big investments in child care can boost labor force participation and narrow the gender pay gap for women in and out of the early childhood care sector.

Anne Kuhn is Kids Count in Michigan director at the Michigan League for Public Policy.

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May is Community Action Month!

Throughout this month join us in celebrating the accomplishments of NEMCSA and other Community Action Agencies. At 1,000 strong, CAAs reach individuals and families in 99 percent of America's counties with life-changing services that empower people to live enhanced lives. Consider giving this month to support the agency mission and help alleviate hardship affecting people that are struggling in our communities at www.nemcsa.org.

Next Board Member Lunch dates:

May 09: Lumber Jack Food & Spirits, West Branch

May 23: El Patron Grill, Gaylord

June 08: Mulligans, Cheboygan

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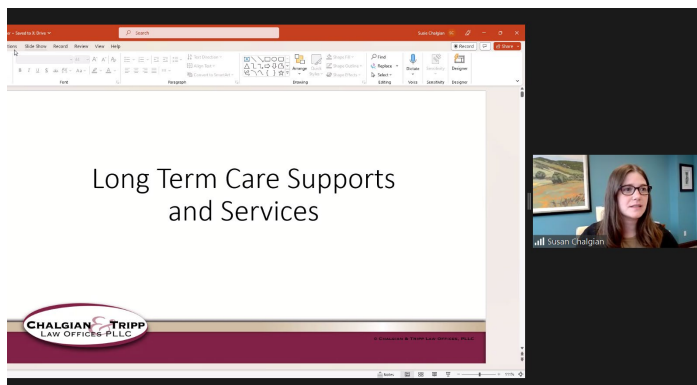
COMMUNITY ACTION

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

Coming soon!



Older Michiganians Day is one of the biggest advocacy events of the year for Area Agencies on Aging and older adults. Aside from the rally and livestream event, there will be a letter writing campaign to ensure every legislator is aware of the issues impacting older adults. If interested in attending the event or if a template letter is needed, contact Laurie Sauer at 989-358-4664 or SauerL@nemcsa.org.



Medicaid LTC Training with Chalgian & Tripp

Over 60 AAA staff, community partners, and Medicaid Medicare Assistance Program (MMAP) Counselors attended a Long Term Care Medicaid Training provided by elder law attorney, Susan Chalgian of Chalgian & Tripp, via Zoom on Tuesday, April 26, 2023. With the Public Health Emergency for COVID-19 expiring on May 11th, and Medicaid redetermination around the corner, the training will help prepare the participants to best serve older adults in our community by brushing up on their Medicaid knowledge. The training was provided pro bono. Thank you, Susan!



Caregiver Empowerment and Wellness Conference

A very successful Caregiver Empowerment and Wellness Conference was held on Monday, April 24, 2023, at the Northern Michigan Banquet and Event Center in Houghton Lake. Over 70 attendees and 19 vendors came for the first in person event since the pandemic began. Keynote speaker, Jill Gafner-Livingston, presented on Caregiver Survival. Other topics included Coping with Change, Grief and Loss, Community Resources, and Stress Less for Mindfulness.

Many thanks to our sponsors, vendors, speakers, and participants for making this event successful. Here are a few participant quotes. One stated, "The caregiver conference reminds us to stop, take a breath, and be in the moment when caregiving." Another participant stated "My husband is a stroke victim; I have found a lot of this material relatable to our situation. Looking forward to next year's conference."

Coming events: Dementia Webinar:

- **June 8, 2023: Dementia Friends Michigan**
- **July 14, 2023: Alzheimer's Association: Coping with Change, Grief, and Loss**
- **August 11, 2023: Coping with Dementia Care Stress**

Dementia Webinar Registration:

<https://forms.office.com/r/J1Qzw3xyjC>

Learn more about the AAA's Kinship Care Program by listening to the latest Let's Talk About Aging podcast found here: <https://www.nemcsa.org/services/senior-services/podcast.html>

Early Childhood Services

PROGRAM IMPACT

COMMUNITY
ACTION
MONTH May 2023

Help us Celebrate!



Happy Birthday Head Start!

The Head Start program was created on May 18, 1965 as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. This month we celebrate Head Start's 58th birthday!



President Johnson remarked:

This program, like so many others, will succeed in proportion as it is supported by voluntary assistance and understanding from all of our people.

The bread that is cast upon these waters will surely return many thousandfold.

What a sense of achievement, and what great pride, and how happy that will make all of us who love America feel about this undertaking.

-May 18, 1965



The Head Start Logo Tells a Story

The two squares represent early childhood by suggesting building blocks.

The arrangement of the blocks represents stairs by which this can be accomplished.

The vertical strips represent the child and parent.

The arrow pointing upward represents the direction out of poverty and on to the future.

The colors, red, white and blue represent the United States and the many opportunities it provides for its citizens.

COMMUNITY
ACTION
MONTH May 2023

Help us Celebrate!



School Success Partnership

PROGRAM IMPACT



Congratulations Elizabeth Skiba, who recently accepted the SSP Area Manager Position! We look forward to Liz joining the SSP Leadership Team and helping support the program.



A special thank you goes out to Lisa Werth, Jolene Price and Mary Ciarkowski, School Success Liaisons within Alpena Public Schools this month!

They have been a part of the team supporting the implementation of the School Success Partnership Program with Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency and Traverse City Area Public Schools and recently spent a day in Traverse City sharing their expertise with the School Success team and facilitating classroom visits and small groups to help TCAPS staff see School Success Liaisons in action.

School Success Liaisons are an integral part of their school communities and many take on roles in developing large scale events that support students in developing social emotional skills as well as learning valuable life lessons. Recently Chris Kasuba, School Success Liaison at Posen Consolidated Schools lead a team that put together a lock in event for their high school students.

Throughout this event students had the opportunity to participate in team building activities with a Survivor theme that challenged their communication and social emotional skills as well as learned the importance of making positive and healthy choices through presentations from Deputy James Leedy, Presque Isle Sheriff Department, Ted Beck, Beck Funeral Home and with a personal story from Jackie Krawczak.

Students were encouraged to make good choices in their lives as they celebrate the end of the school year.

Winning Team of the Survivor Challenge at Posen's Lock In.



Weatherization

PROGRAM IMPACT

Attention:

General and Mechanical Contractors needed to join our Weatherization Program and provide energy saving services to low-income families in Northeast Michigan! For more information call 989-358-4700 or email weatherization@nemcsa.org

The NEMCSA Weatherization Team, lead by Cheryl Laban, has been busy compiling energy usage data from our projects and we have some very good results. Some examples include a working single mom living with her son in a mobile home. The prior 12 months before our program, she was spending \$2,751 per year on energy. After weatherization, her annual cost went down to \$2,035 per year, over \$700 in savings. This is a 27% reduction, a real difference maker in her family's life.

A disabled gentleman living on his own in an older home spent \$2,587 per year on energy in the 12 months prior to our program. After weatherization, the annual cost went down to \$2,034 per year, over \$500 in savings. This was a 22% reduction, another significant impact on his life, especially living on fixed income.



The 96% efficient furnace that was installed in the disabled gentleman's home provided a crucial piece of energy savings for this client.

What is your role within NEMCSA?

Weatherization Inspector

What 3 words describe NEMCSA?

Compassionate, considerate, comprehensive

What is the most unique part of working here? The vast array of homes and lifestyles I see while in the field, no client or home is the same.

Childhood dream job- Teacher or therapist

First job- Auto parts delivery driver

Favorite pet- I had a fish named Oscar as a kid that would jump out of the tank to bite at your fingers. We had to upgrade the lid for his tank. Entertaining, to say the least.

Favorite hobby- Anything outdoors piques my interest!

One more quirky fact (thing that people might be surprised to know about you)-

Successfully playing detective and discovering the root of a challenging problem in a client's home will often make me giggle like a super-villain when the "eureka" moment arises.

Justin Whitscell, WX Inspector



BOSS and Food

PROGRAM IMPACT

COMMUNITY
ACTION
MONTH May 2023

Help us Celebrate!



BOSS Program

Three of the BOSS families have been selected to receive Client Community Action awards from Michigan Community Action Agency! The awards will be presented in May at the MCA Legislative Event that is taking place at the Capital.

Since June 2022, BOSS Program mentors have been able to break down barriers using direct service dollars for a variety of supportive services that include, but are not limited to: critical vehicle repair, cell phone minutes, interview clothing, clothing for children, work clothes, purchase of a vehicle, gas cards, day care expenses, past due utility bills, baby formula and diapers, vehicle registration, organization products, license fees, and school supplies.

The BOSS Program is currently supporting six families through their self-sufficiency journey. Three families are receiving intensive case management support and three families are receiving as needed support. The transition between intensive case management services and as needed case management services occurs when a family has improved their situation and verified through the utilization of the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix. This matrix is a guiding tool that allows for continued measurements to track participant's success in multiple aspects of their self-sufficiency journey.



Food Programs

Did you know that in 2022 the NEMCSA Food Program distributed over 1 million pounds of food through our Golden Grocery Giveaway Program? That is an amazing figure that we are very proud of. Our Food Program staff are enjoying the warmer weather at distributions and enjoying meeting all the new participants that have been signing up to receive services.

We have a few upcoming events including a special sign-up day for our Golden Grocery Giveaway in Otsego County taking place at the Otsego United Way on May 25th, 2023, between 10-11am!



We will also be in Oscoda at a family friendly event called: Touch-a-Truck! Our Food Program truck will be available for families to take photos with and explore. The event is taking place on Saturday, June 10th, from 8am-10am. Our staff will be giving away food through our Food Boost program and signing up individuals for the Golden Grocery Giveaway program.

Homeless & Prevention
Financial Empowerment

PROGRAM IMPACT

COMMUNITY
ACTION
MONTH
May 2023

Help us Celebrate!



Do you remember Erik?

At the beginning of winter, he was sleeping at a campground in a tent with a tarp and space heater. He cooked meals over a fire, if he could get the wood dry enough to light. He was cold, homeless and missing his kids.



Lets see how he is doing!

Fast forward 4 months, he is in a permanent home, has his two sons visiting on the weekends, he is healthy, happy and warmer than ever.

Traci, Housing Administrative Assistant, will be joining Her BOSS program participant and housing Director Victoria in Lansing on May 11, 2023 for Michigan Community Action Legislative day. Traci's BOSS program participant will be recognized for her success in becoming self-sufficient through utilizing help from NEMCSA and community partners. **Congratulations Traci!**



In April, staff attended the Arenac County Community Connections event. It was a good opportunity for staff to connect with individuals from the community as well as to connect with other agencies and share the programs that we offer.



Program staff continue to meet with community members that are facing foreclosure to assist them with applying for the MSHDA MIHAF program and conduct counseling with them to review their finances and assist them with preventing further housing instability.

Since the program opened in February 2022, staff have assisted 50 community members with applying for the program. To date, 25 households have received financial assistance through MSHDA and averted foreclosure, 18 have been denied and given additional resources and 7 still have applications pending.

Staff are continuing to reach out to banks and credit unions within our service area to create new partnerships. With the success of the partnership with Nicolet Bank, we are hopeful that other financial institutions in the area will see the success and partner to help their homebuyers be successful long term.

Volunteer

PROGRAM IMPACT

COMMUNITY
ACTION
MONTH
May 2023

Help us Celebrate!



Program Description

AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs engage low-income, adults 55 years of age and older willing to serve a minimum of 20 hours per week. In return for their service, they receive an hourly stipend of \$4.00, transportation reimbursement, excess insurances, and monthly in-service trainings.

Foster Grandparents provide one-to-one mentoring, nurturing to children with special or exceptional needs, or children who are in classrooms experiencing academic, social, or financial challenges throughout NEMCSA's 11 core counties and Roscommon.

Senior Companions provide friendship, socialization, and companionship for other seniors who may not receive the social engagement they need. Senior Companions serve private homes, and short- or long-term living facilities. Senior Companions, like Foster Grandparents, serve throughout NEMCSA's 11 core counties and Roscommon.

Program Impact

NEMCSA has been sponsoring the Foster Grandparent program for 48 years and the Senior Companion programs for 38. We currently have 22 Foster Grandparents providing direct service to 123 students and 19 Senior Companions providing service to 125 clients.



**AmeriCorps
Seniors**

NEMCSA's Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs partnered with Iosco County's Non-Profit Round Table organization honoring local volunteers during their Volunteer Appreciation Day. Invited guests, volunteers throughout Iosco County, were treated to an afternoon of celebration including light refreshments, raffle prizes and live music.



Foster Grandparent, Dottie Markille, is pictured with FGP/SCP Project Director, Heidi Powers at the event. Grandma Dottie was the lucky recipient of a door prize full of fun games and activities she'll be taking back to her kindergarten classroom at Whittemore-Prescott Elementary School. We will be celebrating Grandma's six years of service at our May 9th recognition.

In addition to Grandma Dottie, Iosco County has two Senior Companion volunteers, Donna Richey who has served for 13 years and our newest member, Mark Barrett, who joined the program in April.

COMMUNITY
ACTION
MONTH
May 2023

Help us Celebrate!



Volunteer

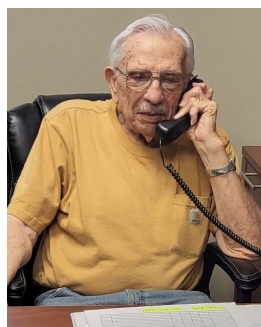
PROGRAM IMPACT



April was National Volunteer Month, a time for us to express our gratitude to all volunteers generously supporting NEMCSA and their communities. We sincerely appreciate their selfless service and NEMCSA is a better organization because of them.

Volunteers play an essential role in our communities, making a significant impact on the world around us. From tutoring children in our Head Start classes, to packing and delivering essential food to those in need or helping clean up and make safe the playgrounds at our local schools, volunteers make a difference every day.

Volunteer Month also serves as a reminder that volunteering is a year-round activity. Now is the time to encourage others to get involved and make a positive impact on the lives of others. It is vital to building strong vibrant communities. Thank you volunteers for making a positive impact on our communities!



NEMCSA's volunteer programs partnered with Great Lakes Great Responsibility to promote both community service and earth day on Saturday, April 29th. Twenty five tenacious volunteers braved the wind, rain and cool temperatures to clean up 6,281 pieces of trash from Oscoda Beaches. Great Lakes Great Responsibility is a Michigan based nonprofit with a mission to clean up the Great Lakes watershed through education and their #GreatLakes1million challenge, a call to pick up 1 million pieces of litter from the Great Lakes basin. More information on their work can be found at greatlakeslove.org.

AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP pairs Americans aged 55 and older with organizations making change in their communities. RSVP volunteers choose how, where, and when they want to serve, with commitments ranging from a few hours per month to 40 hours per week.

RSVP volunteers themselves report better health and longevity having served their community.