

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

November
2025



Thank You Board Members!!



Thank you to our generous Board Members who donated in honor of NEMCSA's 57th Birthday! With the funds donated, we were able to supply the Homeless Prevention Program with over 800 laundry pods and almost 300 sticks of deodorant to distribute to those in need.

From a Client in Mio: I was upset this morning as i had to meet you with these dirty smelly clothes. Now you are offering me food, water, blanket, laundry pods without me even asking for them!

From a Client in West Branch: You have no idea how much I have been needing to do laundry!!

Twenty-four Consumers Energy staff from across Michigan participated in a full-day Poverty Education training led by Frances Ommani, Strategy & Development Director, and Amanda Bergeron, Community Resource and BOSS Manager. The session explored the realities and barriers faced by people experiencing poverty while equipping staff with tools to foster empathy and understanding in their work. Participants shared highly positive feedback, noting that the training deepened their awareness and strengthened their ability to connect with and support customers compassionately.



Big thanks to Consumers Energy for their generous donation of an electric van to NEMCSA! This incredible gift will help us expand our reach and enhance our mission of empowering people and strengthening communities. Pictured: Rich Castle of Consumers Energy and Frances Ommani of NEMCSA, celebrating this exciting step toward a more sustainable and impactful future!



THANK YOU

Consumers Energy

Count on Us®

HAPPY Retirement!

Becky Hawks has retired after 17 years of exceptional service to the agency. Being married to a military man, Becky has had many jobs and over the years has held several positions in the Aging Division. Most recently she worked as an Intake Specialist as well as an inaugural Options Counselor for the MI Options Program. Becky says working for NEMCSA has been her favorite job and she has enjoyed each position she held at the agency. Best of luck in your retirement, Becky. You will be missed!



PACE Northeast Michigan held a Community Open House in October, welcoming the community to check out their new building and learn more about PACE!

REGION 9 AREA AGENCY ON AGING PERSON-CENTERED OPTIONS COUNSELING

Free one-on-one options counseling for adults aged 18 and over.



Provides interactive, unbiased, choices about long-term services.



Connects you to community-based services and resources.



Helps support, guide, inform, and assist you.

CONTACT:



1-800-803-7174
8:00 am - 8:00 pm, M-F



989-358-4611
nwdne@nemcsa.org
8:30 am - 4:30 pm, M-F

NEW PROGRAM!



www.nemcsa.org

Program Impact AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program Update

Thanks to additional funding from the Administration for Community Living, the Ombudsman Program was able to purchase comfort items for Adult Foster Care (AFC) and Homes for the Aged residents in Region 9's counties. Items included a blanket, Chapstick, hand lotion and a calendar among several other items. The staff added these items to wheelchair/walker bags that conveniently hang from these devices. The distribution has already begun and the residents receiving these items are incredibly grateful for the items. Pictured here is an AFC resident with one of the staff. In October, Region 9's two local Ombudsman attended a training session in Frankenmuth with Ombudsman from around the state. One of the presentations was by the Michigan Dept. of Attorney General's Health Care Fraud Division and what their division can do for residents when a complaint has been received.



Those who collect retirement, disability, survivor and dependent benefits will see a 2.8% increase to their monthly benefit in 2026. On average, that means a \$56 increase based on a \$2,000 monthly benefit. The Medicare Part B premium is expected to rise by 11.6% to \$206.50, and the annual deductible is projected to increase by 12% to \$288.



Social Security

Chalgian & Tripp Law Offices provided a free full day Medicaid Bootcamp training October 23rd at Kirtland Community College in Grayling. Attending were all Aging Division staff members, and MI Options community partners—Area Agency on Aging Northwest Michigan, Disability Network of Mid Michigan, and Disability Network of Northern Michigan.



Crawford County Health Carnival

This year's carnival welcomed 170 participants. Everyone involved played a key role in creating a positive and engaging experience for all the attendees. Pictured below are Amy Otto, RSVP Project Director/Long Term Care Ombudsman, and Connie McQuarrie, AAA Administrative Assistant.



New Caregiver Resource

Check it out: <https://www.micaregiverconnection.com>

Program Impact

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Tricia Griffka addressed the Michigan Head Start Association as it's president at the recent Fall Assembly in Traverse City.



Starr Dixon, one of the parents quoted in this article, is the Mid Michigan Community Action Agency Delegate representative on our policy council. Check out the article written by Jackie Mader on [The Hechinger Report](#) website.

MiLEAP Visits NEMCSA



NEMCSA recently had the pleasure of welcoming representatives from the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) to our Alpena offices and Sunset Head Start/GSRP classrooms. During their visit, MiLEAP leaders learned more about NEMCSA's comprehensive early childhood programs and the vital role they play in supporting children and families across our service area. Our visitors observed Pre-K classrooms in action and learned about local successes and challenges, NEMCSA's innovative services, including School Success, Child Care Back Office, and the BOSS program. This visit was an excellent opportunity to strengthen our collaboration with one of our most significant partners at the state level. Together, NEMCSA and MiLEAP continue working toward the shared goal of ensuring that every Michigan child has access to high-quality early learning experiences that prepare them for lifelong success.



Health Event with Community Partners!

An event coordinated by the Early Childhood Health Specialist, Board Member Lyn Behnke, and U of M Flint Professor Christina Snyder, had 23 children in attendance who received 41 health services! Services provided were in collaboration between 12 U of M Flint Nurse Practitioner students, NEMCSA Registered Dietician Janet Malusi, EHS Nurse Jeanette Moran, Wellvance, and Alcona Health Center. Several parents relayed how they love coming to events like this as it is a one-stop-shop and saves them from needing to take multiple days off work.

New NEMCSA Early Childhood Centers Opening in Deckerville, Port Huron & West Branch!

We're excited to be expand access to early learning with new preschool sites open in Deckerville and West Branch, bringing more opportunities for children and families to grow! At the same time, we're busy onboarding staff in St. Clair County, our newest addition to the NEMCSA service area. With 14 Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms currently moving through the licensing process, we can't wait to open the doors and welcome families soon!



Program Impact

BRIDGES OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY



The BOSS Program continues to support transformative progress across Northeast Michigan. This past month, there were several inspiring participant achievements:

- A participant began a new full-time role as a mobile home health care worker earning \$19/hour, while another secured a better-paying position to advance her career.
- Multiple participants have started college programs, including Pharmacy Tech, while another completed her Medical Coding certification, demonstrating continued investment in their futures.
- Several families achieved new levels of financial and housing stability, including purchasing vehicles, moving into more affordable housing, and developing payment plans to manage debt responsibly.
- A participant completed her resilience course.
- Two participants from the same household both obtained full-time employment, and others began part-time roles that align with their family needs.
- Two BOSS families participated in the Pantry Preparedness group session with Leisa Sutton from Suttons Daze, who is also a NEMCSA board member (Thank you Leisa!!) gaining practical skills for food security and receiving copies of the presenter's published book to continue learning at home.
- BOSS Program Graduate in Sept!

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



**Ten Episodes
Now Available!**

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

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

[Podcast Feedback Form](#)

September Impact:

- Total individuals assisted: 123
 - 101 community members
 - 7 internal staff
 - 14 Community Partners
 - 1 For Profit Business
- 46 referrals made
- 65 resources & information shared
- 62 contacts came in via the Community Resource Line

**48%
increase!**



Community Engagement:

- Frances Ommani and Amanda Bergeron attended Representative Mike Hoadley's Community Meeting in Tawas on September 19, 2025.
- Madison Shamel attended the Arenac County Community Connections event.
- Madison Shamel and Amanda Bergeron met with Jen, Executive Director of Tawas Wellness Warriors, to explore collaborative opportunities and ways to support NEMCSA participants.



CRC@NEMCSA.ORG



989-358-4757

Program Impact

SCHOOL SUCCESS



The Top of Michigan Insurance Team generously presented a \$1,000 check to the School Success Team to support the purchase of essential supplies for youth in need. Thank you for your continued support and compassion.

THANK YOU



The Rotary Club of Alpena generously donated personal hygiene supplies for youth across NEMCSA's service area. We sincerely thank the Rotarians for their service and generous contribution to our School Success Program supporting students throughout Northeast Michigan.

Back to School Shoe Drive



Atlanta Community School partnered with their School Success Liaison, Carson, to put together a Shoe Drive event during back-to-school night. Many community members teamed up to provide 62 new and gently used pairs of shoes. Their kindness, generosity, and incredible sense of community are truly inspiring and appreciated. These donations will go a long way in helping so many students feel confident, comfortable, and cared for as they head into the new school year.



School Success was honored to be invited to participate in the League of Women Voters' recent campaign on Fighting Hunger. Lisa, Alpena School Success Supervisor, was proud to represent NEMCSA & the SSP at this important event. In 2023, Alpena County's food insecurity rate was nearly triple the statewide average—a sobering reminder of the challenges many families in our community face. Thanks to the generosity of event donors, SSP received \$950 in donations to help combat food insecurity among the students we serve. This contribution will make a meaningful difference, allowing to provide healthy snacks and essential nourishment for children who need it most. SSP is grateful for the community's continued support and commitment to ensuring that no child goes hungry.



Staff Training

In early September, the School Success Program staff came together for agency and program updates, as well as training. We extend our sincere thanks to the following presenters who contributed their time and expertise:

- Tori Gentry & Kimberlee Hincka - Accounting & Payroll Updates
- Victoria Purvis & Ashley Smart - Financial Empowerment Resources
- Steve Nauta, BHS Financial Advisor - Principal Account Information
- Cathy Macfalda - HR Updates
- John Pintar, Phishing Awareness Training

THANK YOU!



Thank you to Quota of Iosco County who generously provided essential items like clothing, hygiene products, snacks, and water bottles to Gina, the School Success Liaison at Tawas Middle/High School. These everyday necessities make a meaningful difference for students who may not have regular access to them.

Program Impact

HOUSING



Housing Pathways for Young Adults

In September our Youth and Young Adult Coordinator and Financial Sustainability Coordinator met with the students involved in the PIVOT program to discuss our Youth and Young Adult Housing program and budgeting services.

Homelessness Awareness Month



Support Homeless Awareness Month

November 1st- November 30th 2025

Help us stock Street Outreach and Welcome Baskets!

Street Outreach Supplies

Body Wipes	Blankets (new)
Toothpaste	Washcloths (new)
Deodorant	Winter Socks (new)
Body Wash	Gloves
Shampoo/Conditioner	Hand Warmers

Housing Welcome Baskets

Baskets (Laundry/Kitchen Waste)
Kitchen Towels (new)
Household Cleaners
Laundry Supplies (pods please)
Toilet Paper/Paper Towels
Towels/Hand Towels/Wash Clothes (new)
Trash Bags
Dish Soap/Sponges
Can Openers

For monetary donations, scan and tag "Homeless Prevention"

WWW.NEMCSA.ORG



FOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE
CALL 989-358-4678
OR EMAIL
HOUSINGINTAKE@NEMCSA.ORG



October marks a busy and transitional time for Housing staff as we close out the fiscal year and begin planning for the year ahead. It's also when planning for Homeless Awareness Month reaches full speed. This year's theme is "Speak Up. Speak Out. End the Criminalization of Homelessness" highlighting a critical issue: sleeping in places not meant for human habitation is often a last resort when there is no access to affordable housing or shelter bed availability. To support our unhoused neighbors and those transitioning into new housing, Housing staff are organizing a supply drive. Over 40 drop box locations are available. Monetary donations are also being accepted to fill any remaining gaps. Please see the flyer for the items needed. A second flyer with drop-off locations will be released soon.

Welcome Home!

With some help from his case manager, Allen was able to secure safe housing before the cold weather started.



During the month of October, 10 households have been enrolled in the Shelter Diversion program, and 5 of those households have been successfully diverted. So far this month, we have utilized \$700 towards diversion, but most households were able to be diverted with other resources. These funds have helped reach those who are at imminent risk of homelessness by forming a bridge to help before they lose their night-time residence. Having flexible funding available, it has been tremendously helpful with mediation to those doubled up. Most were able to avoid entering an emergency shelter while receiving housing navigation services. In addition, they were able to obtain items and other assistance that could be difficult with other funding guidelines.



On 10/15, Street Outreach Specialist, Chad spoke on WATZ's Mid-Day Spotlight to share about Homeless Awareness Month efforts and all the great things the team are doing in the community.



In October our Youth Advisory Board visited our office to host a listening session with our participants. This was an opportunity for our youth to share their stories and experiences while involved in our Housing Pathways for Young Adults Program. They were provided pizza for lunch and each received a \$75 incentive for attending.

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

Program Impact

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Housing Counseling

In September & October, seven participants completed Homebuyer Education and Pre-Purchase Counseling. Four of those participants have already been pre-approved for a mortgage and will be purchasing a home within the next three months. The other participant is actively working with our Financial Sustainability Coordinator to reduce their debts so that they're able to reduce their debt-to-income ratio and increase their credit score.

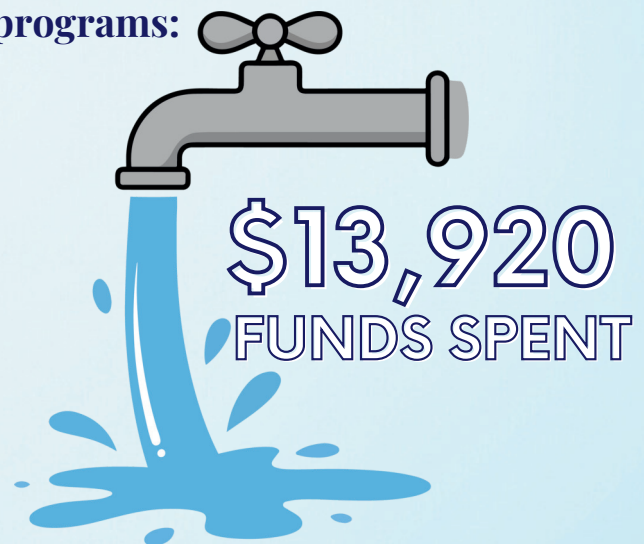
Family Self-Sufficiency Program

The family self-sufficiency program currently has nineteen participants. In October, we had one household graduate, they had amassed an escrow of over \$3,000 that they plan to use to pay off debts, so they are able to move towards homeownership. Ashley, our Financial Sustainability Coordinator is actively working with MSHDA representatives to increase our case load to be able to better assist families in our communities to reach self-sufficiency.

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

WATER PROGRAM

In September and October the Water Affordability Program successfully provided the following assistance through both the water and plumbing programs:



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

Program Impact

WEATHERIZATION



WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BRINGS LIFE CHANGING SERVICE TO WENDY'S HOME

When Wendy learned about Weatherization, she hoped it might make her home more comfortable and energy efficient. What she received was beyond her expectations. Contractors and Weatherization staff worked diligently to upgrade her furnace, water heater, insulation, doors, and electrical panel. Wendy raves about the improvements to her furnace, which is only six years old, but never worked properly prior to Weatherization's involvement. She praises the upgrade in insulation and electrical work, calling it "incredible" and speaks very highly about the professionalism of the staff and contractors. Wendy says, "the work and cleanup were very professional, the contractors knew what they were doing and got the job done." When she signed up for the program, she said she didn't expect to hear back as she knew there was a long waitlist and a lot of client interest. Wendy says, "I am so so grateful for everything... it is so appreciated." She reports more than \$28,000 in home energy upgrades were completed, which adds value, addresses long-term safety, and increases energy-efficiency and comfort. Wendy's closing statement about the program was, "it is a really wonderful program for low-income people to have this kind of assistance. They did more than Weatherization." Wendy's story is one of many showing how the Weatherization Assistance Program helps households improve overall quality of life. We are proud to see the positive impact this program has on our community, one house at a time.

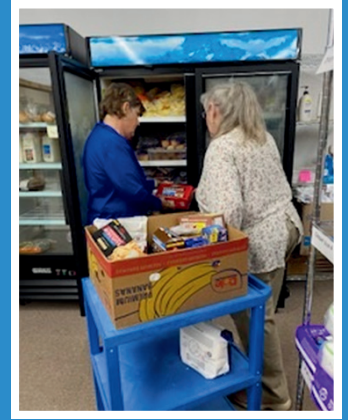


Program Impact

RSVP VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



*We ♥ our
Volunteers*



The AmeriCorps Senior Volunteer Programs and Ombudsman information and resources were shared at Senior Expos recently in Houghton Lake and Gaylord by Heidi Powers and Amy Cook Otto. Seniors continue to reach out to be a part of the volunteer programs and serve their communities. RSVP volunteer Joann Sienko Zadrozny assists clients at St Vincent DePaul with food items.

FGP/SCP VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Carrying On: Impact from Foster Grandparent & Senior Companion Volunteers Will Continue!



On August 28th, FGP/SCP Project Director, Heidi Powers, was notified the Trump Administration's Office of Management Budget (OMB) will release funding previously impounded by the Administration for renewal projects. The decision to fund AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent (FGP) and Senior Companion (SCP) renewal grants by OMB followed litigation filed by 23 State Attorney Generals, including Michigan, and two Governors and an immense advocacy campaign completed by many including our own volunteers. Prior to this unexpected news, both programs were slated for permanent closure September 30th with Foster Grandparent effective July 18th and Senior Companions September 13th. We received the official Notice of Grant Awards on September 10th at which time Heidi began calling all volunteers and station staff personally to share the news. Making the calls and hearing the joy and relief from the volunteers, teachers, station partners was incredibly heartwarming. True "goosebump moments" with everyone contacted and pure joy. Our Grandparents are back in school and Senior Companions continuing to provide friendship and companionship to their clients. Now the work begins to rebuild the programs and come back stronger. We will be hiring new staff and going on a volunteer recruiting binge to make up for very valuable time lost following months of uncertainty. Pictured are our Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion volunteers along with Project Director Heidi Powers at their first get together since receiving the news of the reinstatement of the programs. A day full of hugs and celebration!