

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

April
2025



Advocating for Community Action: NEMCSA Leaders in Washington, D.C.

With funding for essential programs uncertain, NEMCSA CEO Lisa Bolen, Strategy & Development Director Frances Ommani, and Brian McGrain, Executive Director of Michigan Community Action, traveled to Washington, D.C. last month to advocate for the programs that support our communities. They met with key elected officials and attended the National Community Action Foundation Conference, ensuring the impact of Community Action initiatives is heard at the highest levels. Now more than ever, strong advocacy matters.



Program Impact

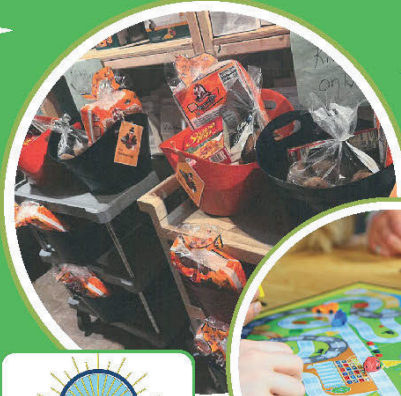
AREA AGENCY ON AGING

REGION 9 AREA AGENCY ON AGING

CAREGIVER RESOURCE CENTER GRANT



ALCONA COUNTY



- Ten Thanksgiving Dinner Baskets were distributed to Kinship families.
- A Kinship Family Game Night will be held on June 5, 2025.
- A Kinship Kinnection Support Group will occur on May 14, 2025.

ALPENA COUNTY

- Holiday cards were sent to Kinship and Dementia Caregivers.
- Caregivers were given appreciation gifts.
- A total of 23 participants attended the Art and Music Therapy classes.
- Eight dementia toolkits were distributed.
- A Kinship Support Pizza Party will be held this Spring.
- Developed a Kinship Caregiver resource library for caregivers to rent materials.



ALPENA *Senior Citizens* CENTER

IOSCO COUNTY

A Caregiver Empowerment & Wellness Conference was held in Hale on Friday, January 17, 2025. Eighteen participants attended, with two vendors. Caregivers learned about Self-care, local resources, tips for caregiving, and the 4-H's for caregiving.



AREA AGENCY ON AGING

OGEMAW COUNTY



- A Caregiver Support Group was established so caregivers no longer felt isolated in their journey.
- A Caregiver Library was created with a variety of items carefully selected to meet the needs of caregivers.



**Ogemaw
Commission
on Aging**

OTSEGO COUNTY

- A holiday party for was thrown with caregiver baskets given to attendees.
- A Caregiver Conference was held on February 5, 2025.
- Four seasonal craft kits were given to participants of the dementia support group.



ROSCOMMON COUNTY



- 50 Caregiver Activity Bags were put together and distributed. The bags included cards, dice, coloring items, matching games, and much more.
- A Caregiver Library was created and stocked with books, videos, and resources pertaining to caregiving.
- A Caregiver Wellness Conference was held on February 20th, with 40 participants attending.



Program Impact

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Head Start Advocacy: Impacting Children and Families

Advocating for Head Start is ongoing, with recent months focused on ensuring legislators recognize the program's community impact. Head Start offers comprehensive early education, health, nutrition, and family support, enhancing school readiness and long-term success for families.

Federal Advocacy Efforts

In January, Early Childhood Services Director Tricia Grifka joined Head Start advocates in Washington, D.C., meeting with Congress members or staff:

- Jack Bergman, 1st District
- Kristen McDonald Rivet, 8th District
- Lisa McClain, 9th District
- Gary Peters, U.S. Senator
- Elissa Slotkin, U.S. Senator

Each office was supportive, emphasizing the importance of continued support for early childhood programs.

State Advocacy in Lansing

In March, NEMCSA Head Start advocates attended Early Childhood Capitol Day in Lansing, co-hosted by the Michigan Head Start Association. The focus was on funding for early education, fair compensation for educators, and improving health for mothers and babies. Representing NEMCSA were: Leigh Sullivan, Renee Clark, Nikki Sprague, Starr Dixon, and Tricia Grifka.

Meetings were held with staff from State Senator Roger Hauck's office and Representatives:

- Timothy Beson
- Matt Bierlein
- Roger Hauck
- Tom Kunse
- Bill Schuette

These efforts are vital for supporting Head Start at state and federal levels. We appreciate our advocates and legislators' support in providing opportunities for young children and families.



Program Impact

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

NEMCSA Cheboygan Head Start hosts 2025 Family Disco Night event

The NEMCSA Cheboygan Head Start recently hosted a successful Family Disco Night event. The event, held in March 2025, aimed to bring families together for an evening of fun and community bonding. Attendees enjoyed dancing, music, and various activities designed to engage both children and adults. The event also served as an opportunity for families to connect with Head Start staff and learn more about the program's offerings and support services.

For more details, you can read the full article on the [Cheboygan Daily Tribune](#).



Current Job Openings in ECS:

- Head Start Regional Managers
- Head Start Area Manager
- Assistant Director of Classroom Support
- Early Head Start Instructional Coach
- Family Educator
- Family Services Coordinator
- Preschool Teachers
- Teaching Assistants
- Education Specialist
- Classroom Aides
- Preschool Classroom Aide Substitutes

There are endless benefits to joining the NEMCSA Team, apply today!

Competitive Wages No Cost Employee Health Insurance Work from Home Opportunities Paid Time Off

Retirement Fund Work-Life Balance Career Development Opportunities Student Loan Forgiveness

Employee benefits contingent on employment status.

Find more information and apply online at
www.nemcsa.org/careers

Program Impact

BRIDGES OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

BOSS Program Success Stories

- Two BOSS participants nominated for the MCA Client of the Year awards.
- Multiple BOSS participants enrolled in Financial Literacy courses.
- Multiple BOSS participants enrolled in Stress Reduction and Resiliency Course.
- A BOSS participant is making strides toward self-sufficiency by seeking out additional employment opportunities and using tax refund to pay off outstanding debts.



Welcome Jenny!

Jenny joined the BOSS Program as a Self-Sufficiency Mentor to give back to the community, drawing from her extensive experience in child welfare and her personal journey as a single parent overcoming barriers. Jenny's passion and dedication align with the BOSS Program's mission, and we are excited to have her - Welcome Jenny!



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

Three 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](#)

In February, the Community Resource Team, alongside NEMCSA's Weatherization Director, Doug Tallant, took center stage at the Hale Senior Center, delivering a powerful presentation on NEMCSA's programs and services. Their mission? To empower, educate, and ensure that every individual knows where to turn for support.

But that's not all! The team provided direct support to 169 individuals—including 5 NEMCSA staff members and 18 community partners—ensuring seamless access to critical resources. The CRC shared phone line was buzzing with activity—103 calls in a single month! Every call represented a real person in need, and the team answered with dedication and care.

Organization Contacts by Type



CRC@NEMCSA.ORG



989-358-4757

Program Impact

SCHOOL SUCCESS



Community Food Partnerships: Monthly Distributions to Feed Families

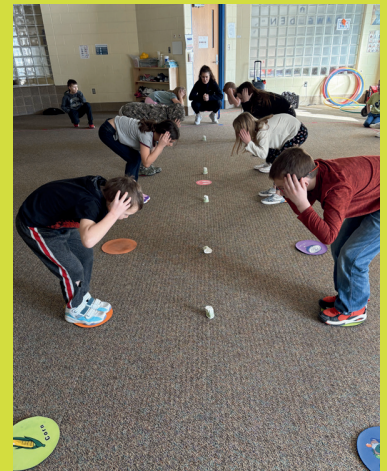


School Success Liaison, Kay Woodruff (Mio), partners with Welch Land and Timber, The Food Bank of Eastern Michigan and Mio Methodist Church to address food insecurity by providing monthly food bags for 24 students/families.



Kindness Month: Challenges, Pledges, and Pop Tabs for Ronald McDonald House!

In February, Ashley Gaus, School Success Liaison at Inland Lakes Elementary, assisted in organizing Kindness Month Challenges for students as well as Kindness Pledges the students could sign. The school also participates in collecting pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald House. Great job, Ashley!



Holiday Helpers: Families Supporting Families in Need



In the Tawas area, generous donors known as Holiday Helpers, along with another family who created a wish list from the school, provided snacks, hygiene products, and supplies for children and families in need. Throughout November and December, Amazon boxes arrived almost daily at Clara Bolen Elementary. What a wonderful community! A heartfelt thank you to Joy Garrison, School Success Liaison at Clara Bolen, for facilitating these valuable resources for families!

Program Impact

Re-Entry Simulation



H&P staff attended a Community Re-entry Simulation to gain a better understanding of the obstacles faced by individuals newly released from incarceration and returning to their communities. The simulation offered a hands-on experience for participants and volunteers who were given a “life scenario” which included a felony charge, stipulations for parole, and various other wild card events. After the timed, 4-week simulation spanning across 2 hours, the group gathered for a panel and open discussion on what was learned. H&P staff volunteered their thoughts on the importance of agency awareness, mental health, and interagency communication to help relieve some barriers to housing and other supports faced by newly released individuals and their families.

Nine months ago, Kathy found herself homeless and pregnant, living on the streets or in a car. Her homelessness was sporadic since 16 years old. She had not had a place to call home in over 10 years. She found a spot at River House and was provided housing resources. With the help of NEMCSA's Permanent Supportive Housing program, Kathy was able to apply for a Stability Voucher. Through PSH's collaboration with Tip of the Mitt, Kathy was leased up on a Stability Voucher. Many agencies have put their resources together to help on the road to stability; those agencies include WIC, DHHS, Child Protection Council of Crawford/ Roscommon County. On March 7th, 2025, Kathy welcomed a happy, healthy baby boy, Andrew. The road to stability continues, but not without the help of PSH and its partners.



The Road to Stability

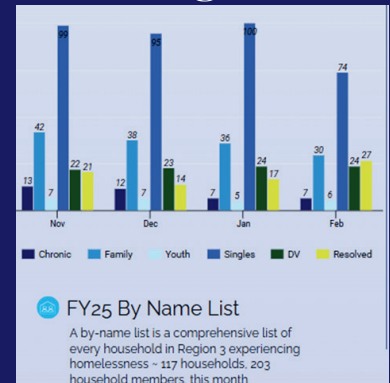
HOUSING

**NEW PROGRAM
ALERT!**

Housing Pathways for Young Adults

In the month of March, the program established their first Transitional Housing unit and have a single male housed in the unit. Staff were able to purchase him a futon, air fryer, bedding, cleaning supplies, several other household items and groceries. There are still 2 households enrolled in the Rapid Rehousing Program who are working on obtaining income, food stamps and reaching personal goals. There are 4 literally homeless households staff are helping complete housing applications, providing resources for employment and helping obtain ID documents. The program is in the process of gaining their second Transitional Housing unit and should have a single adult housed there soon!

Housing Intake



In the month of March, Housing Intake staff met with the homeless shelters in the region to explain program process, train on coordinated entry, and go over any program updates. The access committee has moved monthly meetings to bi-monthly as the group feels we all have strong and efficient access points for our community members. There were 5 motel placements and a total of \$3844.25 spent.

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

Program Impact

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Housing Counseling

With the funding allocated to help stop property tax foreclosures, NEMCSA's Financial Coach was successfully able to assist 26 households with avoiding foreclosure and assist them with learning to manage their finances so they're able to budget their money moving forward to maintain their housing without facing potential foreclosure in the future.

In the month of March, the Financial Coach worked with 5 households that are working with Nicolet Bank to complete Homebuyer Education and Pre-Purchase counseling, so they are able to access MSHDA mortgages and the different down payment programs they have available to become homeowners.

Family Self-Sufficiency Program

There are currently 24 participants in the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. The Financial Coach is actively working with 2 participants that are in the process of purchasing homes and will graduate within the next coming months.

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

WATER PROGRAM

**In March, The Water Affordability Program
successfully provided the following assistance:**

\$17,310

WATER BILLS PAID

\$591

PLUMBING BILLS PAID

\$16,100

PLUMBING BILLS PENDING



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

Program Impact

WEATHERIZATION

Meet Brooke!



The Weatherization Program would like to recognize Brooke Littrup, our newest Navigation Specialist! Although her childhood dream job was to be a marine biologist, she enjoys assisting, educating and enrolling WAP clients in the program. She says she appreciates the supportive, impactful and empowering atmosphere NEMCSA and the Weatherization department creates. She says the most unique part of her 2.5 years here has been the opportunity to work in several different departments and the work life balance NEMCSA allows. In her free time, you can find her hiking with her dog Stella, indulging in her favorite Acai bowl, crafting for herself and loved ones or possibly traveling and visiting National Parks. Brooke joined the Weatherization team in July 2024 and she has been nothing short of a delight to work with, always willing to lend a helping hand and staff are very fortunate to have her on our team.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

FOSTER GRANDPARENT/SENIOR COMPANIONS

Meet Senior Companion volunteer Kristine Ziegler. Before becoming a volunteer, Kris had been a full-time caregiver to her late husband and had become socially isolated attending to his care. Following his passing, she was “bored to death and needed to get out of the house” and wanted to meet new people her own age. Since enrolling in the program in October 2019, she’s done exactly that. She has made many friends at The Villa West Branch and loves making others smile, listen to the stories they have to tell, and provide comfort to those who need it. Her station supervisor, Rebekah Brasseur, can’t say enough good things about Kris. She’s very dedicated to her companions and is willing to do whatever is needed. Her attendance is great and can always be counted on. One of Kris’s companions is blind and enjoys being read to. He’s become so attached to Kris that no one else will do and he only wants Kris. Kris gives her heart and soul to all she serves. FGP/SCP Project Director, Heidi Powers, considers Kris to be a stellar volunteer. She always participates in monthly in-service meetings, asks insightful questions and seeks clarification when needed, and demonstrates all the best qualities of a Senior Companion volunteer. “We are very fortunate to have Kris as part of our Senior Companion program and we hope she continues to serve the West Branch community for many years to come.” Kris has been volunteering 30 hours a week for six years and was referred to the program by another Senior Companion.



*We ♥ our
Volunteers*