

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

May
2026



A trip to Capitol Hill!



NEMCSA staff joined fellow Michigan Community Action agencies and the Michigan Community Action network in Washington, D.C. last month, meeting with policymakers and participating in the National Community Action Foundation Conference. We are grateful for the opportunity to advocate for the programs that make a meaningful difference and to represent the needs and voices of the communities we serve.

Explore These Great Reads



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
**LABOR & ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY**

Women are driving Michigan's workforce growth, but barriers like childcare access and pay gaps remain

The web browser you are currently using is unsupported, and some features of this site may not work as intended. Please update to a modern browser such as Chrome, Firefox or Edge to experience all features Michigan.gov has to offer.

michigan.gov / Apr 2

Women in the Workforce

Women continue to power Michigan's workforce growth, but challenges such as childcare access, wage gaps, and workplace barriers still impact economic opportunity statewide. Read the full article on the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity's website.

Tri-Share Expansion

Michigan's Tri-Share childcare program is expanding with the launch of a Region 3 facilitator hub, helping more families, employers, and communities share the cost of care. This expansion includes eleven counties that NEMCSA serves. Learn more by reading the full article on the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential's website.



MI Tri-Share Expands with Region 3 Facilitator Hub Serving All 11 Northeastern Michigan Counties

The Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MILEAP) today announced that Child Care Back Office has been selected as the Region 3 facilitator hub for the MI Tri-Share Child Care, further expanding the...

michigan.gov / Mar 19



Crush of retirees a crisis in Michigan. State unprepared to meet their needs

Michigan spends more than many states and gets less in return on services for seniors, who face long waits for care, transportation gaps and bureaucracy that pushes them to nursing homes. The problems will only get worse.

Bridge Michigan / Sep 23, 2025

Michigan's Aging Population

Michigan is facing growing pressure to meet the needs of its aging population, with taxpayers carrying much of the cost as the state struggles to prepare for a retiree care crisis. View the full article on Bridge Michigan's website.

Decision Time: College or Stay Home?

Schools in Northern Michigan are navigating the tension between keeping students rooted in their communities and encouraging them to pursue college and career opportunities elsewhere. Check out the full article on Bridge Michigan's website.

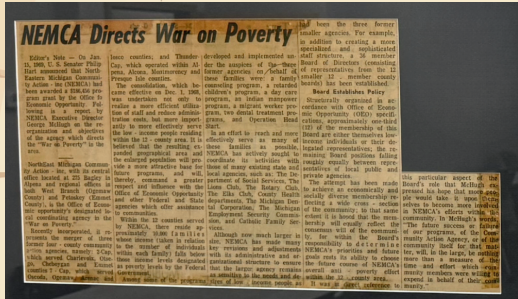


Up North Michigan, schools struggle between pull of home and promise of college

Students' stark choice in northern Michigan: Go to college and never come back — or stay with smaller paychecks. That's put school districts in a conundrum about how best to educate them.

Bridge Michigan / Mar 24

A Piece of NEMCSA History



Be sure to check out the new artwork in the main office conference room and learn more about NEMCSA's history. The display includes two pieces, one featuring the merger of several community action agencies that formed NEMCSA, and another highlighting the ribbon cutting for the ethanol production pilot plant.

PreK for All

On March 25, 2026, the Michigan Head Start Association was represented by Tricia Grifka, MHSA Board President and Early Childhood Services Director at Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency, Inc. (NEMCSA) in Saginaw at an event highlighting the state's ongoing efforts to expand access to PreK for All. The event featured Gretchen Whitmer and underscored the critical role early childhood education plays in shaping long-term outcomes for children across Michigan. Head Start remains an integral part of the state's PreK for All initiative and the Every Child Reads plan, helping to build a strong foundation for literacy and school success. Continued collaboration at the state and local levels ensures that more children and families benefit from high-quality early learning opportunities.



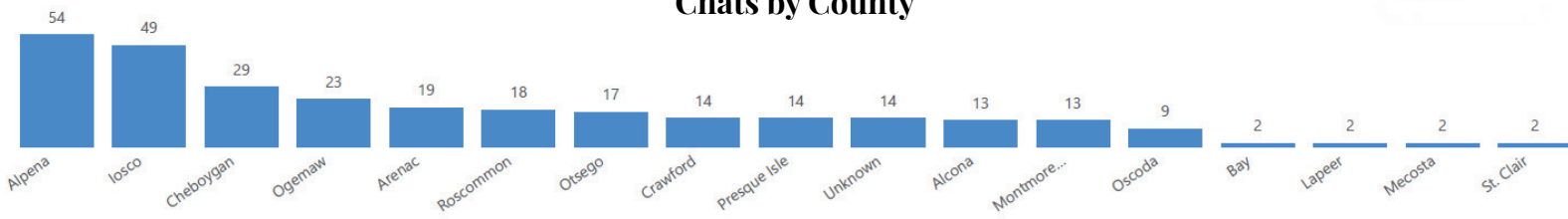
Advocating for Volunteer Programs

Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs Project Director, Heidi Powers, traveled to Washington, D.C. as an At Large Board member of the AmeriCorps Seniors Professional Network. During her visit, Heidi met with staff from Senator Peters, Senator Slotkin, and Congressman Bergman. She thanked them for their support of 2026 funding and shared the impact of the programs across the 12-county service area and Michigan. Heidi looks forward to future opportunities to engage with legislators and advocate for AmeriCorps Seniors programs.

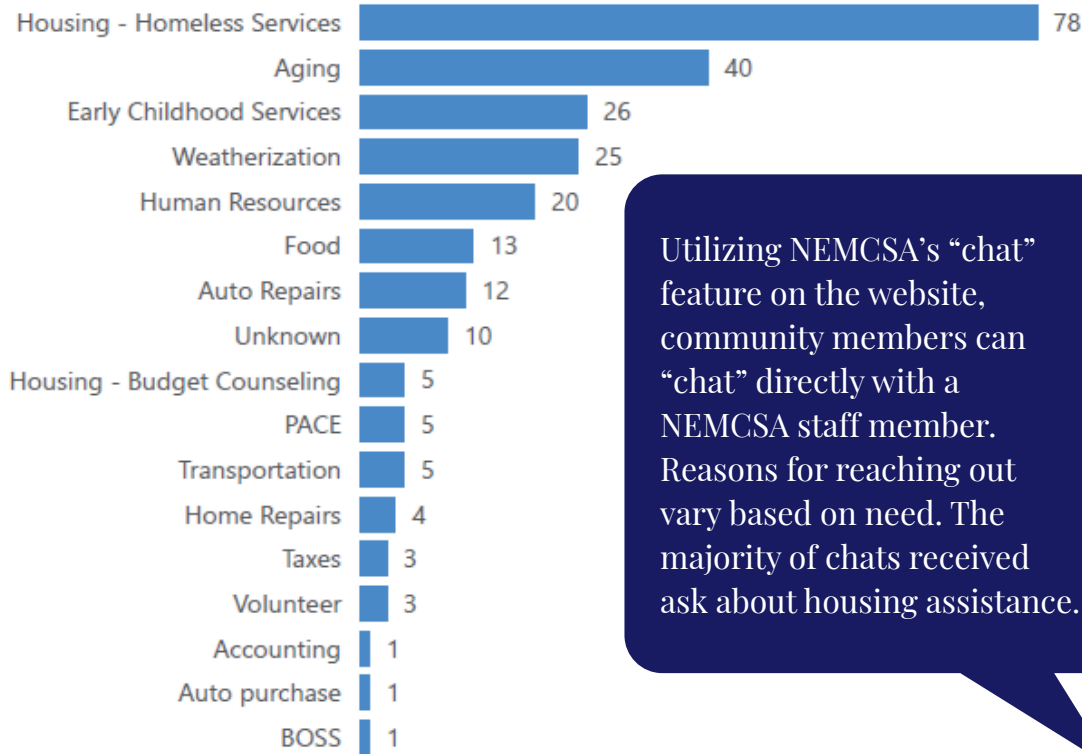


A Look Into The NEMCSA Webchat

Chats by County



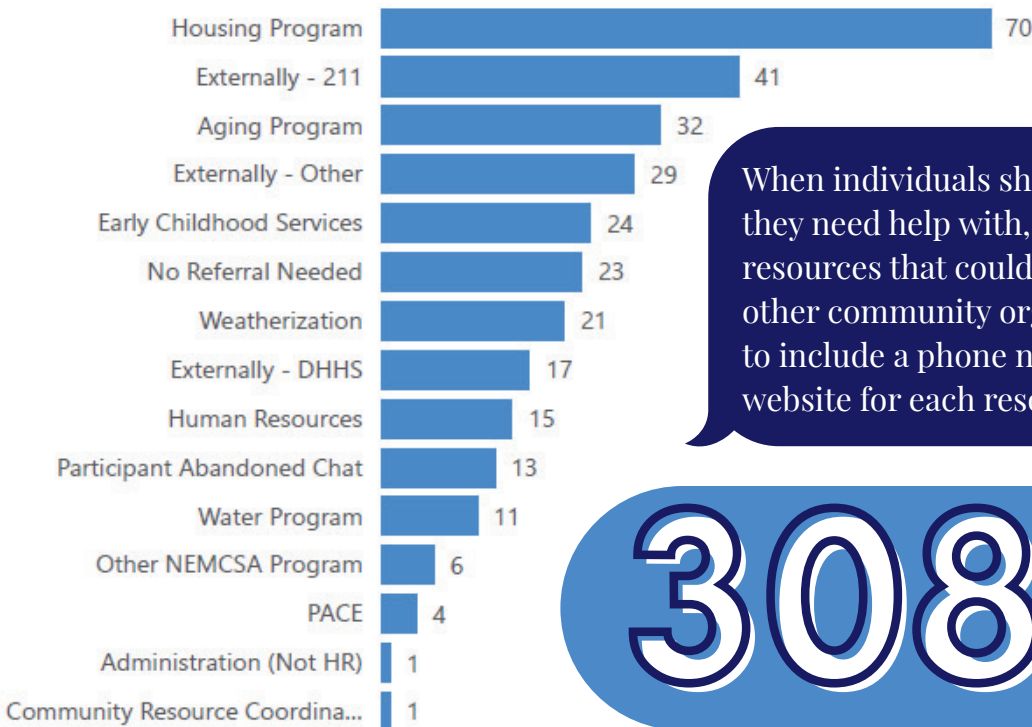
Top 15 Concerns



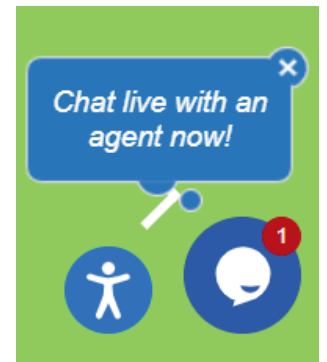
Utilizing NEMCSA's "chat" feature on the website, community members can "chat" directly with a NEMCSA staff member. Reasons for reaching out vary based on need. The majority of chats received ask about housing assistance.



Top 15 Referrals



When individuals share their information and what they need help with, the NEMCSA team suggests resources that could help, both from NEMCSA and other community organizations. The team always tries to include a phone number, email, application link, or website for each resource they recommend.



308

Webchats received from
October 1, 2025 to
March 31, 2026

Program Impact

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Happening Soon—Come Join Us!



REGION 9 AREA AGENCY ON AGING
PUBLIC HEARINGS
 The hearing will discuss the proposed Multi-Year Plan 2027-2029.

The plan will outline the use of funds and provisions of services under the Older Americans Act for the counties of Alcona, Alpena, Arenac, Cheboygan, Crawford, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle and Roscommon.

DATE: May 6, 2026
TIME: 1:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Hale Senior Center
 310 North Washington Street
 Hale, MI 48739

DATE: May 18, 2026
TIME: 1:00 p.m.
LOCATION: NEMCSA Main Building
 2569 US-23 South
 Alpena, MI 49707

TO REGISTER CONTACT CONNIE AT
 989.358.4661 OR
 MCQUARRIEC@NEMCSA.ORG

OLDER MICHIGANIANS DAY
 Join the Area Agencies on Aging Association and your constituents as we work together to

CHAMPION Healthy Aging!

Wednesday, May 13, 2026
 South Lawn | Front of Capitol Building

Or Join Us Via Live Stream!

AREA AGENCIES ON AGING ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN

Contact Laurie Sauer at 989-358-4663 by May 6th if interested in attending Older Michiganians Day

SAVE THE DATE: The Elder Abuse Conference will be September 10th in Standish. More information will be forthcoming.



Kudos to Sydney Funnel on successful completion of her first virtual Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC) workshop. This milestone not only highlights Sydney's dedication, but also Region 9's continued commitment to supporting caregivers throughout the community.

Participants found the workshop both empowering and impactful. One caregiver shared, "It made me realize that I am not the only caregiver in the county and that there are resources out there that I can lean into." Another noted, "PTC gave me the tools and action plan to help me cope with my current situation," while a third reflected, "PTC created a better understanding of my own needs and helped me avoid conflict by giving me confidence in my reactions."

100% of participants rated the program as excellent. This workshop not only provided valuable tools and strategies, but also fostered connection, confidence, and resilience among caregivers. **For more information or Caregiver resources contact, Sydney at 989.358.4616 or funnells@nemcsa.org.**

Congratulations Roscommon County Commission on Aging on your Michigan Health Endowment Fund Grant to increase access to care!

Michigan Center for Rural Health to Develop Roscommon County Senior Telehealth Hub to Improve Access to Care for Older Adults

MCRH is partnering with the Roscommon County Commission on Aging to develop a Senior Telehealth Hub that expands access to care for older adults. Supported by funding from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, the hub will offer welcoming, private telehealth spaces, hands-on technology support, and connections to primary, specialty, and community-based services. By addressing barriers like transportation and digital access, this model strengthens care coordination in a way that is rooted in the community. Lessons learned will help inform future telehealth access points across rural Michigan.

For more information about the Roscommon County Senior Telehealth Hub initiative, please contact | Laura Stoddard, Social Drivers of Health Manager at laura.mispelon@affiliate.msu.edu.

Medicare Update: CMS has automatically reissued over 1.5 million replacement Medicare cards across the U.S. due to compromised information. Many of these cards are not activated nor recognized in Medicare.gov resulting in the beneficiary's insurance not working. Region 9 has helped several beneficiaries, with counselors contacting their plan first, then calling Social Security and Medicare (SHIP Hotline) to get everything back on track. If you are experiencing the issue, reach out to a SHIP counselor at 800-803-7174 for local assistance.

Program Impact

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

CELEBRATING LEARNING AND COMMUNITY

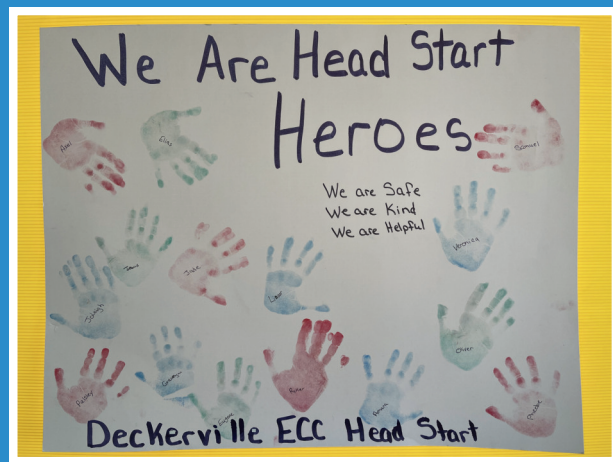


March was full of excitement as NEMCSA early childhood classrooms celebrated March is Reading Month. The classrooms welcomed a wonderful mix of guest readers: librarians, police officers, elected officials, staff, high school students, parents, and even a former Head Start student. It's been so fun to see the smiles on children's faces and the meaningful moments happening in classrooms. These experiences help build early literacy skills and show children that reading is valued by their entire community.

In April, that excitement continued with Super Hero Week during the week of April 13. This statewide effort, led by the Michigan Head Start Association in partnership with parent leadership and supported by NEMCSA's Policy Council, focused on celebrating the everyday superheroes in the programs: children, families, and staff.

Classrooms brought the theme to life through simple, engaging activities like wearing superhero shirts, sharing their "superpowers," and participating in obstacle courses, dramatic play, and problem-solving centers. Just as importantly, children practiced kindness, teamwork, and helping others, reminding us that these are the true superpowers.

These celebrations highlight the incredible work happening every day in the classrooms and the strong connections between NEMCSA programs, families, and communities. We are proud to celebrate our Head Start superheroes!



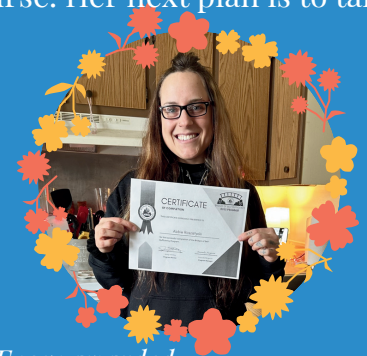
Program Impact

BRIDGES OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

BOSS Program Success Stories

Abbie enrolled in the BOSS Program in early 2024. At that time, she was worried about losing her apartment and needed to work more hours. She was relying heavily on her child support payments to get by. She had also wrecked a vehicle and had to purchase a new one, an unexpected expense. While in the BOSS Program, she set the goal of getting her medical billing and coding certification. She worked with MI Works and enrolled in online courses through CMU working on a self-paced program. The BOSS Program was able to assist with the purchase of a laptop for school and also provided her with printer ink to assist with schoolwork. While progressing through her school program, BOSS assisted her financially with a couple of oil changes for her vehicle, a license plate registration renewal, and a driver's license renewal expense, all of the expenses that are necessary but can be a financial burden. BOSS also assisted with her apartment rent payment at times. In September of 2025, Abbie successfully completed her medical billing and coding course. Her next plan is to take the state licensing exam after she has time to prepare.

The families across Northeast Michigan continue to make strides toward financial independence and personal growth. Recent participant milestones include: career advancement, financial wins, education milestones, and program growth and skill building.



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

Season two of the Empower & Strengthen Podcast now has eight episodes. The most recent episode features an inside look of NEMCSA's 2025 Annual Report. Be sure to check it out on Spotify!

Community Engagement & Collaboration

- Ongoing weekly collaboration with IRESA Adult Education, including regular meetings and shared support for BOSS families
- Participation in the monthly HSCC meetings and ongoing communications
- Amanda became a member of the Senior Americorp Advisory Committee and attended their meeting in March.
- Amanda & Birdie met with leadership from Michigan Rehabilitation Services to discuss collaboration and support opportunities for the populations we serve.
- The NEMCSA Community Resource Team provided support to 94 individuals for the Month of March. Including 8 NEMCSA staff. The majority of requests for services come from the CRC phone line.



CRC@NEMCSA.ORG



989-358-4757

Program Impact

SCHOOL SUCCESS

Gina Murphy, School Success Liaison, and Amanda Lizotte, School Social Worker, led a very successful Spring Food Drive at Tawas Middle/High School. They partnered with student council leaders to organize a friendly competition between the classes and staff. The student leaders took the lead in designing a fair point system, which helped create excitement and ensured everyone felt the competition was balanced and fun. The class with the most points at the end earned a pajama day on the Friday before spring break. To keep things lighthearted and inclusive, if staff earned more points than the winning class, they were also rewarded with a pajama or sweats day. Both students and adults fully embraced the challenge, and the positive energy throughout the competition was evident. They were also grateful to see strong community involvement—several parents volunteered to donate items and support the event. Thanks to the great turnout and participation, they were able to give away all available food during the week leading up to spring break. Overall, the event was engaging, community-driven, and a wonderful example of collaboration between students, staff, and families. Thanks to their efforts, students and families who may face food challenges have access to food over Spring Break. School support staff continually go above and beyond to ensure students are cared for—even when school is not in session. Thank you, Gina and Amanda, for making a difference!



School Success leadership recently met with State Representative John Roth in Traverse City to advocate for continued support of the School Success Program. The program is currently funded at \$1.525 million in state dollars, within a total program budget of \$3.6 million, underscoring the importance of sustained investment to support children and families across the region.

The Lewiston Moose Lodge generously donated \$1,000 to supplement a \$1,500 grant from the Northeast Michigan Youth Advisory Council. Together, these funds will support the Lewiston Elementary School Wellness & Hygiene Initiative, benefiting students in Pre-K through 5th grade. The initiative will provide essential personal hygiene kits to students, helping promote health, confidence, and wellness. Each kit will include a bag, toothpaste, toothbrush, comb, soap, shampoo, and deodorant for students in 4th and 5th grades. This project was inspired by classroom lessons developed through SSP's Mind, Body, and Soul Grant, highlighting the importance of self-care and overall, well-being. Special thanks go to Anne Proctor, School Success Liaison (pictured in the middle), for fostering meaningful community partnerships and charitable relationships that directly benefit Lewiston's students.



The School Success Program is excited to announce a new partnership with Grayling Elementary, bringing a School Success Liaison position to serve students in Kindergarten–4th Grade. Therefore, we are thrilled to welcome Donna Mooney as our newest School Success Liaison! Donna joined our team just before Spring Break and is already hard at work supporting students at Grayling Elementary. She has jumped right in and truly shines, bringing an extensive background in youth programs—most recently with NEMCSA's Head Start program in Grayling. Welcome to the team, Donna! We are so glad to have you and look forward to the positive impact you will make.



Welcome Donna!

Program Impact

HOUSING



Housing Pathways for Young Adults

The Youth Housing program currently has 25 households enrolled in Rapid Rehousing, eight occupied transitional housing units and four street outreach enrolments. Staff are actively working with 20 households who have been pulled for either FYI (Fostering Youth to Independence) or Housing Choice Vouchers. To date, the program has spent a total of \$102,739 in rental assistance for Rapid Rehousing, \$61,843 in rent for transitional housing, and \$13,610 in financial assistance for transportation, household items, application fees, groceries and identification documents.

Shelter Diversion Program

During the first quarter of 2026, the Steps 2 Stability (S2S) program served 14 households (twenty-seven individuals), including both adults and children, by providing short-term, flexible financial assistance to prevent homelessness and stabilize housing. The program achieved ten positive exits, with no households returning to homelessness within 30, 60, or 90 days, demonstrating strong early outcomes and effective use of resources. S2S funds were primarily used to address immediate barriers to housing stability, including security deposits, first month's rent, essential utility payments, and assistance obtaining required documentation for housing applications such as Housing Choice Vouchers. Participant engagement was generally brief and targeted, with most households exiting the program within 30 days after their housing crisis was resolved. A notable success this quarter included supporting a single mother in safely exiting an unhealthy living situation and securing her own apartment, while also taking steps toward improved employment and long-term stability. The primary challenge identified continues to be the limited availability of affordable housing options that remain financially sustainable once short-term assistance ends. Overall, the S2S program demonstrated strong performance this quarter, effectively leveraging limited funds to resolve housing crises, prevent returns to homelessness, and support participant stability during periods of significant housing system strain.

Homeless Prevention

Homeless Prevention Staff have utilized Rapid Rehousing funds to resolve homelessness for four households in the month of April that were previously living in places not meant for human habitation or emergency shelter. A former Rapid Rehousing program participant recently shared with his case manager that he has been able to successfully save \$6,000 towards the down payment of a home of his own! He feels that this shows that consistent support, healthcare, and mental health resources can help someone get back on track in life, leading to improved thinking and ways of living.

As we head into warmer weather, Street Outreach staff are seeing an increase in referrals for those experiencing homelessness in tents, campers and cars.

The increase comes with an increase in needed supplies of bug spray, sunscreen, tarps, bottled water, flashlights, and batteries. Several donation box sites from Homeless Awareness Month in November have requested to maintain a box year-round to continue meeting the needs of our unhoused neighbors. These boxes will be getting a summer facelift with new decorations and updated needs lists from staff while they are in the area.



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

Program Impact

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

The first program at the Alpena County Jail has been successfully completed after six financial empowerment sessions. The future is looking bright for this program as staff are set to continue with additional classes in the future, with hope for expansion into other jail environments.

Program Impact to Date:

- Rental counseling to 75 individuals
- Pre-purchase counseling to 17 individuals
- Homebuyer education to 13 individuals
- Foreclosure assistance to 11 individuals
- Property tax assistance to prevent foreclosure for 14 households

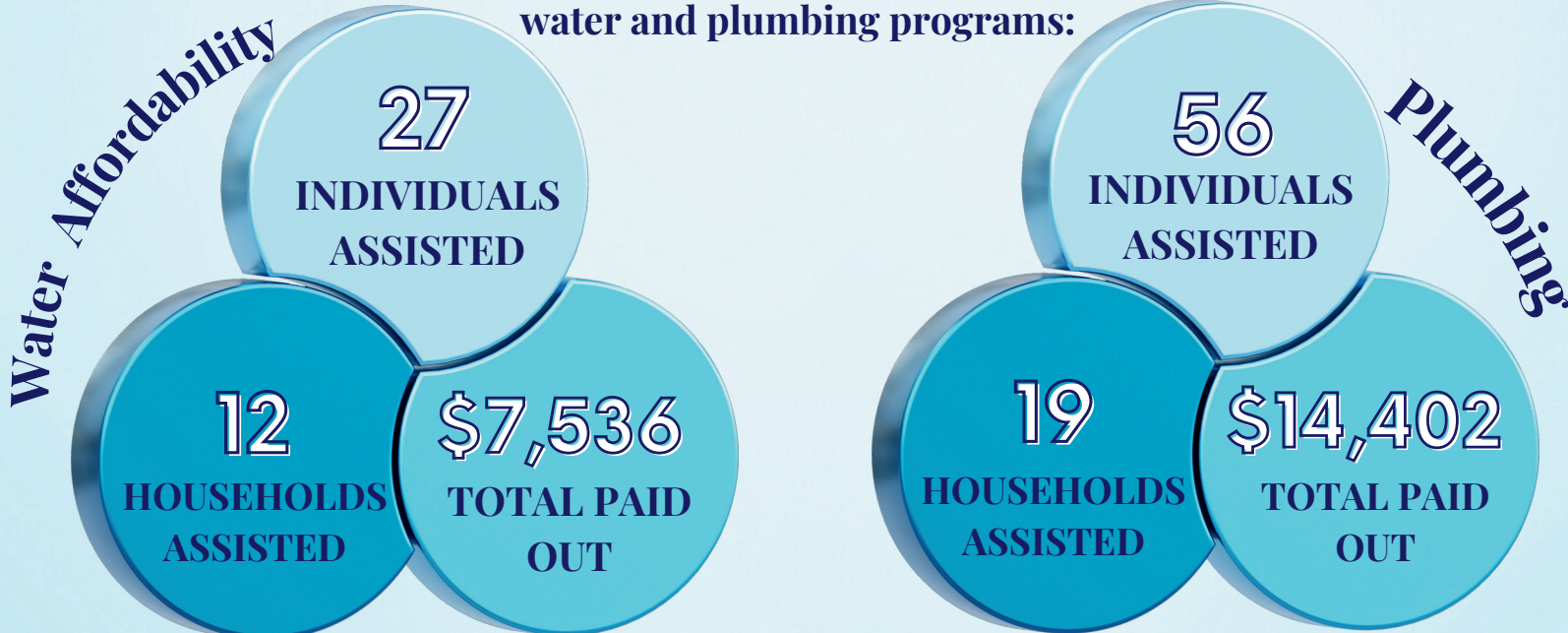


At the beginning of March, staff were able to attend the Housing Expo at the Aplex in Alpena followed by the Regional Housing Summit in Grayling in April.

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

WATER PROGRAM

In the month of April, 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.

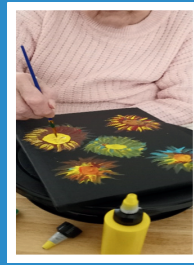
Program Impact

FGP/SCP VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

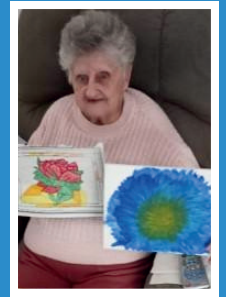
Senior Companions Are So Much More Than Friendly Visitors – They Make Things Happen!

Allow me to introduce Senior Companion volunteer Diane Macreno and her client Donna. At the first introduction, Diane and Donna hit it off immediately and knew they were going to enjoy each other's company. Through their twice weekly visits at Donna's home, Diane learned that Donna had formal training as an artist but had given up her passion for art as she aged and it became more difficult to get around and secure the art supplies she needed. Until meeting Diane, Donna hadn't picked up a paint brush for longer than she could remember! Diane picks up whatever items she can find including watercolors, crayons, and even a painting wheel and brings them to Donna and they spend their time together bonding while Donna makes her art. Diane just loves watching Donna smile as she works on a project. Diane is willing to do just about anything for her clients. In addition to spending time with three other in-home clients in the Oscoda area, she spends one day a week at Medilodge of Tawas City visiting with residents.

Diane is also a new member of our Foster Grandparent & Senior Companion Advisory Group. We are very excited to welcome her energy and fresh ideas on volunteer recruitment, project management, and ways we can best showcase our Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs.



*We ♥ our
Volunteers*



WEATHERIZATION Meet Intake Specialist, Christine Roulo!



Christine has worked here at NEMCSA for 2 years, beginning in the Head Start program and then starting her journey in Weatherization 9 months ago. Christine is the first point of contact clients have when they reach out for assistance. She loves providing potential clients with a soft place to land, an ear to listen and offering any resources she can as well as educating them on exactly what Weatherization is and how we can assist them in their time of need.

If you happen to run into Christine during her time off, she could potentially be indulging in her favorite slice of pizza, reading a book, on her pontoon boat, kayaking down the Ausable River or at a youth sporting event for one of her five grandchildren.

Christine appreciates the work life balance NEMCSA offers her and we are so thankful she is a part of the NEMCSA Weatherization team.



58 YEARS STRONG. HELP US REACH \$5,800 THIS MAY!

May is Community Action Month, and We Need You!

How You Can Help:

Your donation fills the gaps where grants simply can't, providing things like:

- Food for a family in need
- Transportation support to get to work or a doctor's appointment
- A pair of boots for a child facing a cold winter
- Support for Seniors
- And so much more.



If you would like to make a donation – THANK YOU! This can be done on our website at www.nemcsa.org under the “Get Involved” tab. Checks can also be mailed to the NEMCSA office at 2569 US 23 S, Alpena, MI 49707. NEMCSA is a 501(c)3 for tax deduction purposes.

