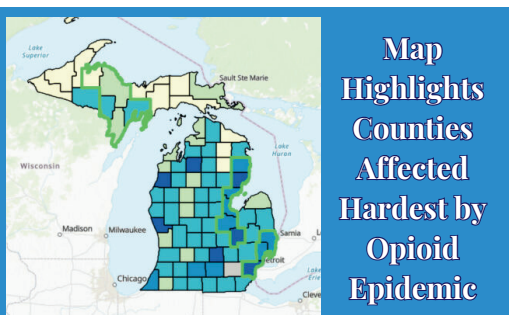


# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

December  
2023



Map  
Highlights  
Counties  
Affected  
Hardest by  
Opioid  
Epidemic

“Substance abuse is a complex medical issue with ties to mental health, lack of social infrastructure, and limited economic mobility. Analyzing multiple indicators related to opioid use, access to medical care, and poverty provides new insights into the causes and consequences of Michigan’s opioid epidemic,” said H. Luke Shaefer, faculty director of Poverty Solutions. <https://poverty.umich.edu/2023/11/09/new-michigan-landscape-map-highlights-counties-affected-hardest-by-opioid-epidemic/>



## TOP WORKPLACE

I have something exciting to share — NEMCSA has again been named a Top Workplace by the Detroit Free Press Top Workplace Awards! The award is based solely on the feedback many of you offered through the employee survey we administered just a few months ago. More than 500 of you participated, and I want to thank you for your input. Being named a Top Workplace is a big deal! I’m honored, especially because the judges were you, our employees! I appreciate all of you and the important work you do. You make this a great place to spend a career.





# Give the gift of a Fresh Start



## Drop off Locations:

### Alcona:

- Cole's Appliance
  - 420 E. Traverse Bay State Rd., Lincoln
- The Lunchbox of Curran
  - 7095 M-72, Curran

### Alpena:

- Wolverine State Credit Union
  - 1381 N. Bagley St., Alpena
  - 417 W. Chisholm St., Alpena
- All Saints Catholic Parish
  - 817 Sable St., Alpena
- Cliff Anschuetz
  - 1074 U. S. 23 N., Alpena

### Iosco:

- The Cozy Cup Coffee Company
  - 118 Newman St., East Tawas
- The Tea House
  - 1296 Newman St., East Tawas
- Cole's Appliance
  - 215 W. Lake St., Tawas City

Homeless Awareness Month is observed yearly in the state of Michigan. The entire month showcases avenues in which individuals, families, agencies, and businesses can play a role in ending homelessness.

This year, NEMCSA's Homeless & Prevention Services team is asking: "How can you help end homelessness?"



Those experiencing homelessness or are in the process of exiting homelessness are in need of basic supplies.

Donations accepted beginning  
November 1, 2023

## Drop off Locations:

### Iosco Continued:

- Oscoda Township Library
  - 6010 N. Skeel Ave, Oscoda
- Wolverine State Credit Union
  - 201 N. State St., Oscoda

### Ogemaw:

- MDHHS
  - 444 E. Houghton Ave., West Branch
- The Daily Cup
  - 114 N. Williams St., Rose City

### Otsego:

- Northwind Apartments
  - 403 W. Mitchell St., Gaylord (Last door near dumpster side)
- State Savings Bank
  - 126 E. Main St., Gaylord

### Roscommon:

- MDHHS
  - 715 S. Loxley Rd., Houghton Lake
- Kiss Me Coffee
  - 829 W. Houghton Lake Dr., Prudenville



How to Get help  
989-358-4678  
housingintake@nemcsa.org





# Program Impact

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

### 8 Ways to Help Aging Seniors During the Holidays

If you're looking to give back this holiday season, helping your aging seniors is a great place to start! The holidays can be the most wonderful time of year but many struggle during this time of year. Holidays can be hard on aging adults especially if they are dealing with grief, live alone, have mobility issues or are unable to see their families.

1. **Check in** – Don't forget about your aging neighbors or loved ones. Visiting can do wonders during the holidays.
2. **Assist in the shopping** – Offer to take them shopping, shop for them, or help them shop online.
3. **Help decorate** – Offer to set up their tree, unpack ornaments, or add lights to their windows.
4. **Assist in making a favorite meal or recipe** – Spend an hour or two making a favorite family dish or dessert. Purchase or make and decorate cookies.
5. **Light up their life** – Take them for a ride to see the Christmas decorations in town.
6. **Fill their mailbox** – Ask friends or church groups to send cards. Help them write and send their own holiday cards.
7. **Include them in church, family, or community activities** – Invite them to church, help wrap gifts, or make cookies.
8. **Give the gift that keeps on giving** – Check in or call regularly, deliver a meal, drive them to the store or appointments, do minor household repairs, etc.



### Medicare Open Enrollment

One of the great things about Medicare is that beneficiaries can evaluate drug costs for 2024 and change their Part D drug plan during the annual Open Enrollment periods to save money. From October 15 through December 7, enrollees can review their Part D prescription plan and choose a new plan to start January 1. Then starting January 1 through March 31, Open Enrollment begins for Medicare Advantage Plans (HMOs and PPOs with drug coverage). This is where beneficiaries can review up to 52 Advantage plans made available throughout Region 9 counties and compare healthcare costs, prescription costs, and extra benefits.

To assist beneficiaries with this process the Michigan Medicare Assistance Program (MMAP) has certified counselors available through local Councils/Commissions on Aging (COA) located throughout Region 9. Up to mid-November (the halfway point), Region 9's counselors have **saved 1,526 beneficiaries over \$1,960,646 in prescription drug costs**. If beneficiaries do nothing and decide not to participate in Open Enrollment, they will keep their plan as long as they pay the monthly premium, but their copays could cost a lot more in 2024. Appointments can be made by calling your local COA or 800-803-7174.

### Caregiver Resource Center

Great news! Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) across the state are developing Caregiver Resource Centers with a \$5 million allocation from the state's ARPA funding. NEMCSA's AAA has been awarded \$191,750.00 of that one-time funding to help support family caregivers in our service area. The AAA will do this by developing a four-week Self-Care Module, a Support Group Network as well as a virtual Support Group, outreach, and enhancing already developed caregiver programs and services. More information to follow!

### Aging Opioid Grant

Region 9 AAA's proposal has been chosen to participate in the Aging Opioid Grant through the Bureau of Aging, Community Living, and Supports (ACLS Bureau). This opportunity allows Region 9 AAA to educate and increase awareness of older adult substance abuse and misuse for staff members, community partners, and older adults in Region 9's service area. More information to follow!

### Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

Have you ever wondered what Region 9 AAA's Long Term Care Ombudsman does? The Ombudsman strives to improve the quality of care and quality of life experienced by residents who reside in licensed long term care facilities. Licensed long term care facilities are nursing homes, homes for the aged, and adult foster care homes. An ombudsman advocates to protect seniors' rights, works to prevent abuse, and helps long term care residents resolve problems or provides information and assistance.

Hats off to the local Ombudsman, Maija Aikens. Below, data shows the scope of services provided by her in the twelve county region:

Region 9 Ombudsman

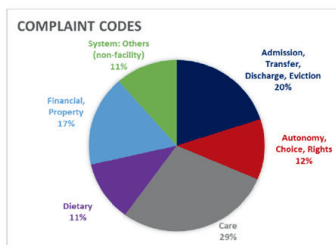
FY2023

Nursing Homes	NH Beds	HFA	HFA Beds	AFC	AFC Beds	Total
21	1,306	2	95	103	941	2,342

MLTCOP | MICHIGAN LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

	Facility Visit: Non-Routine Access	Facility Visit: Routine Access	Information and Assistance to Facility Staff	Information and Assistance to Individuals	Participation in Facility Survey	Resident Council Participation	Training Attended by Ombudsman
Sum of Instances	63	109	66	242	3	19	52

	Total Cases	Cases Opened	Cases Closed	Complaints
FY2023	40	40	40	44



### Annual Conference



Area Agency on Aging Association of Michigan Annual Conference was attended by 6 AAA staff in Lansing earlier in November.

- Laurie Sauer, Carolyn Riske-Miller, Audrey Gekeler, Jenna Lindholm, and Katlyn Franks

# Program Impact

## EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

### NEW CLASSROOM OPENS

LOCATION: Herron, MI



As school districts stretch and grow, Head Start sometimes finds itself without classroom space. When this happened in the area west of Alpena, many hands helped create a new space for our community's children. After looking at every possible option, NEMCSA Head Start partnered with a local small business owner to rent and renovate space to make it a welcoming environment for preschoolers.

Many people and many hours of work are involved in an undertaking like this. Lisa Fluharty, Area Manager, states, "Thank you to everyone who helped my team through this process." This site is fully staffed and even has a Foster Grandparent!

In the photo, you see staff in the process of setting up the classroom, planning, and preparing for licensing, and their first day with children.

Finding licensable space is one of the barriers Head Start expects to continue to face in the coming years, but our innovative and hardworking staff to rise to the challenge.

Did You Know?

Head Start was created in 1965  
by Lyndon B. Johnson.  
We are 58 years old!

- In Michigan, 21,863 children attend Head Start, and 7,020 children are enrolled in Early Head Start.
- Classroom staff are highly qualified and receive many hours of training every year.
- Children who attend Head Start demonstrate marked academic and social progress and are more likely to enter kindergarten ready to learn.



- Head Start & Early Head Start services are provided at NO CHARGE to those who qualify.
- Head Start children have a higher likelihood of graduating high school, attending college, and receiving a post-secondary degree, license, or certification.



# Program Impact

## FOOD PROGRAM



*Pictured left to right: Phil Sutton, Leisa Sutton of Suttons Daze, Tammy Dean and Norm Apsey from NEMCSA's Food Program Department.*

### **NEMCSA Extends Gratitude to Supporters for Successful GoFundMe Campaign**

NEMCSA expresses profound gratitude to the compassionate individuals and organizations whose generosity propelled the success of their recent GoFundMe campaign. The campaign, dedicated to enhancing NEMCSA's Food Programs, has raised vital funds to support families across 11 counties in northeastern lower Michigan.

As the cost of living continues to rise, many families in our region face heightened challenges, especially with the onset of the cold season. The primary objective of the GoFundMe campaign was to provide essential funds to alleviate financial burdens, with a specific emphasis on fortifying the NEMCSA Food Program. Allowing the Food Program to purchase food items that they would otherwise not be able, to provide not only variety but also nutritional options to families.

"We are deeply moved and profoundly grateful for the overwhelming support received from our community and beyond.

The success of this campaign underscores the collective strength and compassion of individuals coming together to support our neighbors in need," expressed Tammy Dean, Food Program Coordinator at NEMCSA.

The funds raised are dedicated to the NEMCSA Food Program, ensuring that families in need receive vital sustenance during challenging times. This support allows NEMCSA to maintain and expand its food assistance initiatives, responding to the growing demand within the community.

NEMCSA extends special thanks to Leisa Sutton from Sutton's Daze, a dedicated advocate committed to assisting people in northeast Michigan. Her unwavering support and dedication have been instrumental in the success of this campaign.

For those interested in supporting NEMCSA's ongoing efforts or learning more about their programs, please visit: [www.nemcsa.org](http://www.nemcsa.org) or call 989-358-4600.

NEMCSA remains deeply appreciative of the overwhelming community support and looks forward to continuing its mission of serving and empowering families in northeast Michigan.



# Program Impact

## BRIDGES OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

### SUCCESS STORY



Sharing a heartening success story from the BOSS (Bridges of Self-Sufficiency) program that truly underscores the transformative impact staff are making in the lives of individuals. Susan, one of the program participants, has achieved a significant milestone on her journey toward self-sufficiency. Susan has not only taken charge of managing all her bills, including rent, but she has also demonstrated remarkable financial empowerment under the guidance of her new mentor, Amanda Bergeron. Amanda conducted a thorough budget review, uncovering opportunities for substantial savings. Through Amanda's assistance, Susan identified a potential \$70 in savings by switching her car insurance provider and an additional \$50 by making the strategic decision to eliminate her cable bill. Susan also successfully applied for an internet stipend. As a result, Susan is on track to transition from having approximately \$40 left over every month to an impressive surplus of almost \$200 in her budget. To further fortify Susan's financial stability, Amanda and Susan explored budget plans for both her electric and gas bills. This strategic approach aligns with the commitment to not only address immediate needs but to empower participants with tools for sustained financial well-being. Susan's journey extends beyond financial stability. She is gaining confidence and embracing a newfound sense of security after overcoming the challenges of chronic homelessness and hopelessness. Amanda, in her mentorship role, has introduced practices such as gratitude exercises, mindfulness techniques, and positive affirmations to support Susan's overall mindset shift. This success story is a testament to the dedication of the mentors, the effectiveness of the program, and the tangible impact staff are making in the lives of those served. It exemplifies the positive ripple effects that extend far beyond the immediate financial realm, touching on the emotional and psychological well-being of participants. As Susan's achievements are celebrated, it renews staff commitment to providing the support and resources needed to empower more individuals on their paths to self-sufficiency.

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Hello, NEMCSA family! As the Community Resource Coordinator, it's been a privilege to serve the community, connect with individuals, and provide valuable resources. Here's a glimpse into the recent happenings:

### Outreach Events in October:

- Attended two vital outreach events in October, each contributing to NEMCSA's mission of support and outreach.

1. Sunrise Centre Agency Overview: At Sunrise Centre in Alpena, an agency overview was presented to residents. It was an excellent opportunity to engage and share valuable information. During the event, 23 flyers covering various departments and programs, including Housing, the Water Program, Financial Literacy, and my own CRC contact information were distributed. Questions were also answered for the wonderful residents!
2. Project Connect in Onaway: The Project Connect event at St. Paul's Church in Onaway was a significant milestone. Resources were also offered to over 50 families and individuals. It's heartwarming to see the community come together. The top programs that received inquiries at this event were HR for careers, the Water Program, a NEMCSA Programs Overview, and Weatherization.

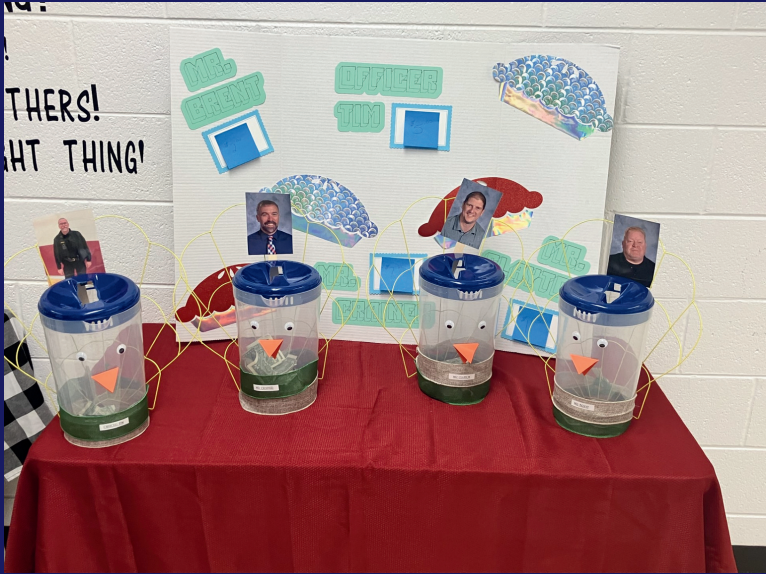
### Support to 66 Individuals:

In addition to these community events, resources and assistance was provided to 66 individuals throughout October. This included 17 NEMCSA staff members. It's a reminder that NEMCSA is all part of a supportive community, and together, staff can achieve great things.



# Program Impact

# SCHOOL SUCCESS



SSP Liaisons will do anything for students and SCHOOLS! Brent (Richard) Rellinger pictured far right is in this lineup with 3 other Whittemore-PreScott staff in their fundraising efforts. The staff that collects the most money gets "Pied" in the face at the school assembly.

AAACU donated 500 turkey dinners, with all the side dishes, to families in the AAACU Branch Areas. School Success Staff in these areas coordinated families to receive these bountiful feasts. Many SSP workers delivered meals to homes. Many thanks to AAACU, for giving us the opportunity to reach families that may have gone without over the holiday. We are grateful!



APS LINCOLN ELEMENTARY



**Sarah Benjamin**  
Staff Member  
of the Week  
#WeAreWildcats

APS LINCOLN ELEMENTARY



**Alicia Lakin**  
Staff Member  
of the Week  
#WeAreWildcats

APS ACES



**Nancy Kreis**  
Staff Member  
of the Week  
#WeAreWildcats

*Congratulations!*

Alpena Public Schools recognizes staff for their hard work. It is wonderful that through our partnerships, School Success workers are major contributors to the school environment. Congratulations to Sarah Benjamin (Lincoln Elementary SSP Liaison), Alicia Lakin (Lincoln Elementary SSP Behavior Tech) and Nancy Kreis (ACES Academy SSP Liaison).

WELCOME



Welcome to NEMCSA and the School Success Program, Kelly Heikkuri! Kelly has joined the SSP team as a Behavior Tech for the AXIS Program at TBJH. AXIS is an alternative setting at TBJH to assist students in recovering credits and meet individual social-emotional needs.



# Program Impact

## HOUSING

THANK YOU TO THE TEAM!

*This month:*

**10** households out of homelessness

**13** adults & **10** youth

Northern Michigan nonprofit collecting donations for those experiencing homelessness



*Hector Villarreal,  
Program Coordinator,  
presenting to Foster Grant  
Parent and Senior  
Companions regarding  
the Water Affordability  
Program.*



November is Homeless Awareness Month. NEMCSA staff have been busy spreading awareness and collecting donations.



*Executive Director, Abbey  
Podbielski and member of the  
lighthouse clubhouse*



*Collections for the kindness  
closet from Wolverine State  
Credit Union*



*Ashley Smart, NEMCSA  
Housing Resource Specialist,  
speaking on WATZ 99.3 on  
homeless awareness and  
donation opportunities.*



*Staff and community gather for homeless awareness walk*

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

How can you help?  
Canned food with metal tab, baked beans, canned chicken/tuna, granola bars, water

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

## FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

In the month of November, staff worked with **2 households** to complete **Pre-Purchase Counseling** to better help them become prepared to complete the homebuying process.

Staff are still working with members of the communities to assist them with applying for assistance with the MIHAF program through MSHDA. MSHDA announced on November 6th that they will be **closing the MIHAF portal to new applications on December 8th at 11:59 pm**. If you have anyone who has been experiencing difficulties, please have them reach out for assistance with applying before the program is closed.

In the month of November, NEMCSA had **4 new households** sign up to participate in the **Family Self-Sufficiency Program**. These households will meet with staff quarterly to set and reach housing goals for the next 5 years while growing to financially support their households. In November, MSHDA completed an audit for the FSS program that consisted of reviewing client files to make sure they met HUD standards for the program. The program audit passed with flying colors and mention from MSHDA staff on NEMCSA staff organization and efficiency with running the program across the 12 counties.

Homeowners who have fallen behind are able to apply for assistance with the following items:  
Delinquent Mortgage, Delinquent Property Taxes, Condo Dues, Homeowners Insurance, Mobile Home Lot Rent, Land Contract Payments, Utility Bills (Heat, Power, Water, Internet).

*"Thank you so much for helping me understand the homebuying process. I can't wait to become a homeowner." - NEMCSA Client*



# Program Impact

## VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

### SENIOR COMPANION & FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAMS



Pictured from left to right: Foster Grandparent volunteers Barbara Selesky and Pat Marchlewski, Senior Companion volunteer Donna Richey; NEMCSA Board representative and community healthcare representative Patricia Rondeau, RN; Foster Grandparent Janet Callen; staff member and Project Director, Heidi Powers; Senior Companion volunteer Helen Johnson; and Executive Director of the Alpena Senior Citizens Center and COA representative Andrea Hepburn.

Meet the members of the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs Advisory Group. Having an Advisory Group is a grant requirement, but beyond the statutory requisite, they are invaluable to the programs! They represent their fellow volunteers, speak on behalf of their respective communities, and provide valuable input and support to the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs. Their contributions go beyond satisfying the administrative and programmatic responsibilities. They are great ambassadors, sharing information about the programs, assisting with volunteer and station recruitment, and bringing innovative ideas to programming.

All members volunteer to be part of the Advisory Group and a couple of them travel through multiple counties to participate in the quarterly meetings. NEMCSA is grateful for their wisdom and sage advice!

# Program Impact

# VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

## RSVP

NEMCSA RSVP and NEMCSA School Success have joined forces to connect senior volunteers with classrooms, empowering them to mentor and guide local youth. NEMCSA RSVP, dedicated to engaging seniors aged 55 and above in meaningful service, recognizes the valuable experience and wisdom seniors bring to the table.

This partnership will match senior volunteers interested in mentoring with local schools seeking mentors. Through their guidance, the volunteers will empower young individuals, fostering a sense of belonging, empowerment, and academic success. With seniors sharing their life experiences and wisdom, students will receive the support, motivation, and guidance they need during this crucial stage of their lives.

Research shows that mentoring has a profound impact on youth, boosting self-esteem, reducing risky behaviors, improving academic performance, and increasing the likelihood of pursuing higher education. By bringing NEMCSA RSVP volunteers and School Success together, we are creating a supportive system that nurtures the potential of our children, empowering them to become the leaders of tomorrow.



NEMCSA RSVP staff recently had the opportunity to honor the courageous men and women who have selflessly served our great nation by participating in local Veterans Day activities. On November 10th, both Amy and Rick eagerly joined forces with community organizations to commemorate and celebrate Veterans Day.

Amy could be found at the Roscommon County Commission on Aging's annual veterans' recognition and pinning luncheon where she presented a special reading to the over 100 people in attendance. In Alpena, Rick participated in WATZ radio's 2nd annual Veteran's Day donation drive. The donation drive organized by WATZ collected donation items to restock NEMCSA Homeless and Prevention's Kindness Closet as well as monetary donations of \$1,000!

Participating in these local Veterans Day activities was truly an honor and a privilege. Staff were reminded of the importance of unity and the power of gratitude as we came together to express deep appreciation for veterans. By actively engaging with the community, staff hope to foster a lasting legacy of respect and support for those who have served the nation.



# Program Impact

## WEATHERIZATION

A HUGE congratulations goes out to Cheryl Laban for passing her handwritten BPI EA Exam! Keep up the GREAT work that you do. Cheryl!

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

Here is what she had to say.

“I obtained my MI State Energy Auditor certification in January 2023, but the DOE requires BPI certification to continue in Weatherization. After meeting all BPI prerequisites, there are 2 types of exams that must be passed to become a certified BPI HEP Energy Auditor: a written exam and a field test. It was a great relief to pass the written exam part. I had heard it was difficult to pass and to not worry if I didn't pass the first time – I did! I still need to take the Field Test portion which I plan on doing in December.

I have built a good base of knowledge with the help of everyone on the Weatherization Team and many classes through MiTEC. I have studied many hours in prep for each exam and I learn from every house I audit. It's a continual thing – I need to learn constantly because every house is different, and every house needs its own solutions.

I'm excited to continue working in the Weatherization Program. We are making a big difference in many people's lives and it's a great feeling knowing they are warmer in winter and saving energy”-

Cheryl Laban



In other news – NEMCSA currently has over **50 homes in progress** and have managed to cut the waitlist for services in half from **12 months down to about 6 months**. As the program strives to increase production and continue to close the gap in the waitlist, staff would like to acknowledge the countless hours and efforts our contractors and staff have devoted to this cause and our program.

Thank you so much!

### WEATHERIZATION WORKS!

Common Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) measures include: air sealing, wall and attic insulation, duct sealing, and furnace repair / replacement.



USE UP TO  
**40%**  
LESS ENERGY

with the Weatherization Assistance Program.



MDHHS  
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



## GIVING BACK TO OUR COMMUNITIES!



Christopher Powroznik is an Early Head Start Home Visitor in Iosco. When he is not at work, Chris spends his time helping coach the mini mites hockey team in Tawas. He even has his EHS jacket on while doing so! Thank you for helping out in your community, Chris!

## HOLIDAY SEASON

NEMCSA is proud to have been selected as one of the local non-profits in Alpena to be a part of the Season of Light Exhibit at the Besser Museum.

The tree incorporates various ornaments featuring information about NEMCSA & its programs.



## Governor's Awards



THIS WEEK, NEMCSA STAFF WENT TO DETROIT TO RECEIVE TWO GOVERNOR'S SERVICE AWARDS. THE SCHOOL SUCCESS PROGRAM WAS HONORED WITH THE YOUTH IMPACT AWARD, WHILE THE OLDER ADULT VOLUNTEER AWARD WAS GRANTED TO AN RSVP VOLUNTEER. CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU TO ALL THE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS WHOSE EFFORTS MADE THESE AWARDS POSSIBLE!