

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

April
2024



A trip to Capitol Hill! ✈️



Lisa Bolen, Frances Ommani & Cathy Macfalda spent a week in Washington DC for the National Community Action Foundation (NCAF) Conference. While they were there, they had the opportunity to meet with elected officials to educate them about NEMCSA's wide range of programs aimed at serving the communities.





Photo credit provided by ECIC

On March 5th, Lisa Bolen, NEMCSA's Executive Director/CEO, and Frances Ommani, NEMCSA's Strategy and Development Director, attended a crucial session at the Regional Childcare Planning Grant Peer Community meeting in East Lansing. Joined by representatives from across Michigan, the gathering aimed to strategize solutions to childcare challenges statewide. The meeting provided a collaborative platform for stakeholders to share strategies, receive feedback, and prioritize state-level initiatives to improve childcare accessibility. The insights gained from the meeting lay a foundation for ongoing collaborative efforts to enhance childcare accessibility and quality statewide, ensuring every child's access to essential services for their growth and development.

Alpena News Staff Writer, Temi Fadayomi, recently wrote an article about a study done by the University of Michigan. The study revealed that childhood poverty rates are the highest in Northeast Michigan. The overall state rate of children living in poverty is 18% with the Northeast Michigan counties rate is 24%. Two counties have rates higher than the regional rate, Alcona at 26% and Montmorency at 28.5%. Data from NEMCSA's Community Needs Assessment was referenced as well. To view the full article, visit [The Alpena News website](#).

THE ALPENA NEWS

Childhood poverty highest in Northeast Michigan, study finds

ALPENA — Northeast Michigan counties face the highest rate of child poverty in the entire state, according to the newest University of Michigan Poverty and Wellbeing Map. According to the map, about 24% of children across Alpena, Presque Isle...

The Alpena News / Mar 29



**Crawford
County
Commission
on Aging &
Senior
Center
Grand
Opening**



'Working my tail-end off just to get by': This Walmart worker blasted older Americans for calling young folks...

The video has struck a chord.

Moneywise / Mar 6

An article on MSN written by Jing Pan discusses some of the frustrations the younger generation face in today's economy. Featured within the article is a viral TikTok video of a young Walmart employee. The young woman talks about how the older generations are always referring to Gen Z as lazy, yet her generation is often working 40 hours or more a week and still finds it difficult to make ends meet.

[View the full article on MSN.](#)

Program Impact

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Coming Soon: Older Michiganians Day - May 1 at the State Capitol!

Plan now to join NEMCSA for an important day of advocacy with state legislators.
Contact Laurie Sauer at 989-358-4663, if interested. Northeast Michigan's voice needs to be heard.

Spring is here and so is conference season.
Join these two important events!



Caregiver Empowerment and Wellness Conference

This conference invites caregivers of all types, guardians, professionals, and direct care staff, whether caring for someone with dementia or a chronic illness to attend.

DR. FEI SUN
Technology Tools for Caregivers

JENNA LINDHOLM
Identifying Community Resources

LISA DEDDEN COOPER
Understanding Dementia and Brain Health

NICOLE WETHINGTON
Take a Break, Before You Break

19 APRIL
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Mio Baptist Church (357 South Mt. Tom Road Mio, MI 48647)

To register contact 989.358.4616



ADVANCING CAREGIVING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

This conference aims to explore the important role of technology in caregiving while celebrating diversity and strength within the caregiving community.

DR. FEI SUN
Technology Tools for Dementia Care

DR. DANIEL VELEZ ORTIZ
Expanding Access to Support and Services through Technology

JAMES GIORDANI
Technology to Support Aging in Place

PAUL FREDDOLINO
Technology to Foster Social Connections

BETH NOLAN, PHD
Developing Activities That Have Meaning for Those Living with Dementia

This conference invites caregivers of all types, guardians, professionals, and direct care staff, whether caring for someone with dementia or a chronic illness to attend.

FLYING PIG VENUE (STANDISH) | MAY 17 | 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

989.358.4616 | mainvilleb@nemcsa.org



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING

On March 15, half of the Aging staff were trained in Mental Health First Aid by North Country Community Mental Health. Karla Eisner and Amy Kotulski did a great job teaching the course. The second half of the Aging Division will participate in a session on April 19th.

PODCAST

Listen to the latest podcast about MMPAP here:
<https://www.nemcsa.org/services/senior-services/podcast.html>



Program Impact

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES



Early Childhood Capitol Day March 20, 2024

Michigan is losing \$2.8 billion a year from inadequate early care and education due to families leaving the workforce because of inaccessible child care.

The 2024 Early Childhood Capitol Day brought parents, early childhood professionals, advocates, and community members together to elevate their voices and push for change through policy. Participants heard directly from community leaders impacting Michigan families with young children and met with state representatives and senators. Senator Kristen McDonald-Rivet spoke on the steps of the Capitol of her background in Head Start and how parents are the driving force behind the program.

Tricia Grifka, Early Childhood Services Director, and two child care providers met with Senator McDonald-Rivet's office to discuss the need for increased funding for early childhood education, specifically increasing compensation for the early childhood workforce.

Program Impact

FOOD PROGRAM

The Food Programs has seen an increase in participation! In January, the program packed approximately 2300 boxes, and then in February, 2600. Food program staff believe that participants are feeling the increase in food prices and are coming back. The pork loins and cherries that were handed out were also a huge hit. NEMCSA currently has requested that the pack crews come twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday during “off” road weeks to help prepare for the month of distributions. The program is looking for any help in opening products before distributions. Opening the products takes place on Mondays and Wednesdays for those who may be interested in volunteering. With only two people in the warehouse, doing everything has proved to be quite difficult. Again, kudos to the warehouse staff for making sure all is done in the warehouse.



Thank you to our dedicated staff!

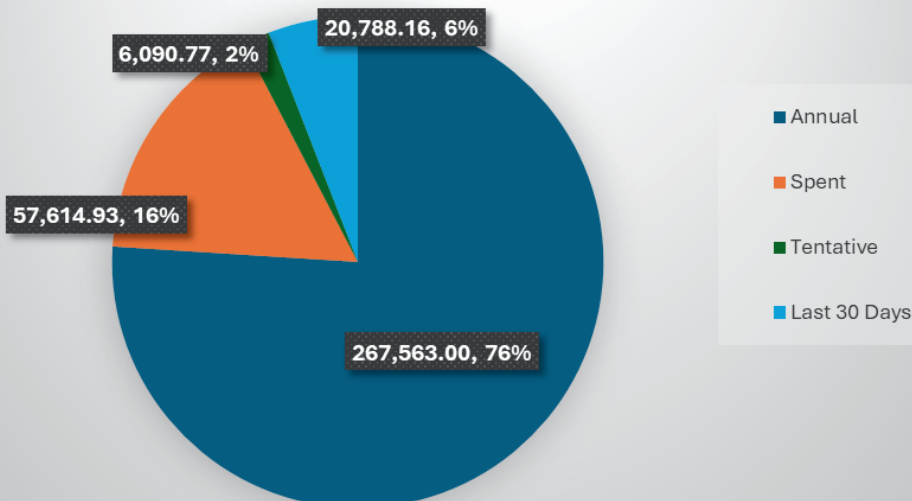


A special highlight goes to another one of our team members, Brooke Litrup. Brooke moved to the food programs from RSVP. Brooke took to the food programs like a champ. Each distribution week, she takes the applications and enters them into the system, relieving the Program Director of that duty. There are no less than twenty or thirty applications, which can either be new participants or recertifications. The process does not just include entering them into the database, but also making sure they are filled out correctly and contacting participants if there are questions. She also handles the phone lines on the days that she works, which is another huge relief! Brooke has shown her talents as a quick learner and very dependable. When asked, she will also help at the distributions in Alpena and is very good with each of our recipients.

We are so happy to have Brooke on our team and thank her immensely for her dedication!

WATER PROGRAM

Water Affordability Program



Working with City and Township Water Departments has allowed staff to continue get information out about the Water Affordability Program. Most of the City and Townships now include the program flyer with any past due or disconnect notices.

Program Impact

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

During February, Madison and Amanda conducted a series of community visits throughout Alcona County, engaging with local organizations to raise awareness about NEMCSA's services. Stops included visits to key locations such as the DHHS office, Alcona News, Alcona County Offices, Alcona County Library, and Curtis Township Library. These visits provided valuable opportunities to connect with community members and distribute NEMCSA flyers, furthering outreach efforts.

Throughout the month, NEMCSA CRCs had the privilege of assisting 55 individuals, families, and community partners, including six dedicated NEMCSA staff members. From offering vital resources to providing crucial support, attending essential meetings, and creating informative content, the CRCs remain dedicated to serving the communities and meeting their diverse needs.

NEW!

New Vehicle

Assistance Program:
NEMCSA is excited to announce the launch of a new Vehicle Assistance Program, aimed at providing critical transportation support to NEMCSA participants in need!

*"In the midst of chaos,
there is also
opportunity."*
- Sun Tzu



BRIDGES OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Progress with the BOSS program expansion continues, and NEMCSA achieved several significant milestones. In addition to the operational progress, program staff also had the opportunity to engage with the University of Michigan (U of M) during a check-in meeting.

During the meeting with U of M, the representative began reviewing data, surveys, and conducting interviews with four BOSS mentors regarding the training process associated with the expansion. The staff eagerly anticipates the upcoming presentation in April, which promises valuable insights and recommendations based on U of M's analysis.

Here are the key achievements for the BOSS program in February:

- Participants were selected and enrolled in the program.
- Mentors received comprehensive training on database usage and program expectations.
- Participant orientations were conducted to ensure a smooth onboarding process.
- Direct services were provided to program participants.
- Data quality checks were performed, with files reviewed to ensure accuracy.
- Nearly 75% of participants have completed initial assessments and set goals.

Additionally, the program is proud to share that staff assisted a family financially with bed bug remediation to ensure their child could return to the classroom comfortably.



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.

Program Impact

SCHOOL SUCCESS



School Success staff are helping schools shift the morning message from "You are late...again" to "Welcome, We are so glad you are here!"

Students and Families at Whittemore-Prescott Elementary School are digging deep on improving attendance with the help of School Success Liaison, Brent Rellinger and other staff. On this bulletin board at Whittemore Prescott Elementary, students are recognized for their exceptional effort and "Striving for Five" (reward system for when a student demonstrates 5 days of perfect attendance). Go Cardinals!



Inland Lakes Elementary celebrated Black History Month and inclusion in February with creative and engaging bulletin boards and projects. Pictured is School Success Liaison, Ashley Gaus. Ashley does great work consistently creating new ideas for bulletin boards and putting these together all over the building.

THANK YOU

A big thank you to St. Paul Lutheran Church for thinking of the Hinks students. Hinks Elementary in Alpena recently received a generous donation from St. Paul Lutheran Church. The donations are geared toward helping students be successful while at school. Gifts included socks, undergarments, dry-erase markers, tape, Play-Doh, 3-ring binders, and more. In addition to the wonderful gifts, the church also donated \$200.00 to help Hinks students as needed.



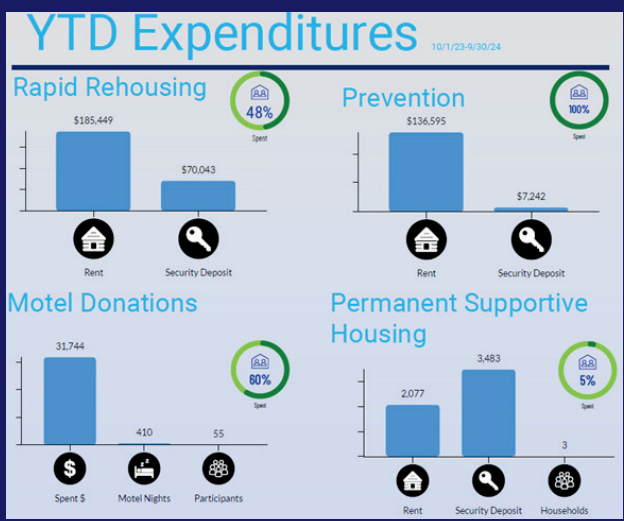
Program Impact

HOUSING

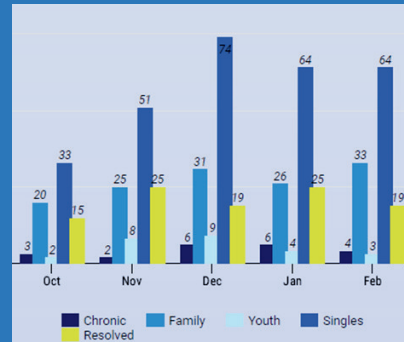
Despite the reduction in street homelessness observed this month, the commitment to preventing homelessness remains steadfast within the organization. Recognizing the ongoing need for proactive measures, staff have taken steps to ensure the continuity of the prevention programs.

In response to the sustained demand for prevention services, the program has pursued additional funding from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) to extend the duration of the prevention program until the end of the grant year.

By leveraging partnerships and securing additional resources, NEMCSA can continue to make a meaningful impact in reducing homelessness and promoting housing stability for all members of the community.



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



FY23 By Name List

A by-name list is a comprehensive list of every household in Region 3 experiencing homelessness ~ 102 households total this month

Literally homeless assessment location	Feb
Alcona	0
Alpena	8
Cheboygan	3
Crawford	4
Iosco	5
Montmorency	1
Ogemaw	0
Oscoda	1
Otsego	17
Presque Isle	0
Roscommon	0

Coordinated Entry

The system designed for prioritizing and matching households to available permanent housing resources

source: Homeless Management Information System, Feb 2024

The collaboration between NEMCSA staff and the Center for Charity in Alpena County has resulted in the establishment of a much-needed community center for the homeless. The center serves as a beacon of hope and support for individuals experiencing homelessness, offering access to vital resources. Operating on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7:30 am to 4 pm, the center provides a warm and welcoming environment where individuals can find respite from the challenges of life on the streets.

Inside the center, various services are available to meet the diverse needs of its guests. These services may include:

- **Basic Needs Assistance:** The center offers essential supplies such as food, clothing, hygiene products, and blankets to ensure that individuals have their basic needs met.
 - **Case Management:** Trained professionals work closely with guests to assess their individual situations and develop personalized plans for accessing housing, healthcare, employment opportunities, and other support services.
 - **Referral Services:** Staff members are well-connected within the community and can provide referrals to other local agencies and organizations that offer specialized assistance, such as substance abuse treatment programs or legal aid services.
 - **Community Engagement Activities:** The center may organize recreational activities, social events, or volunteer opportunities to promote socialization and community involvement among guests.
- Overall, the community center for the homeless represents a collaborative effort to address the complex needs of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Program Impact

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT



During the last week of February, NEMCSA's Financial Coach attended a training conference in San Francisco hosted by NeighborWorks America. The training was focused on Post-Purchase Education/Counseling and will allow the agency to expand the current services to offer counseling to households that own their home and aren't currently losing it to foreclosure, which will have been unable to do before now.

Financial Coach, Ashley, with class instructors and authors of *Keeping the American Dream* Lori Hall and JoAnn DePenning.

In the month of March, staff worked with 3 households to complete Pre-Purchase Counseling to better help them become prepared to complete the homebuying process, completed three Homebuyer Education classes, and two households participated in Rental Counseling. These households were all previously homeless and are working with staff to be able to maintain their housing.

In the end of January, NEMCSA created internal assistance to help prevent households from experiencing foreclosure due to property taxes. In the month of February, the program has had 12 households contact staff for assistance and are in the process of approving them for payment.

The Family Self-Sufficiency Program currently has **42 active participants**. The number is always changing as new people are enrolling or people deciding that they don't have to participate and are exiting.

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

Program Impact

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

SENIOR COMPANION & FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAMS

Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion volunteers gathered for the first in-service meeting of 2024 on March 12th. The guest speaker was NEMCSA's very own Keri Crispell, Housing Stability In-Take and Certified HUD Counselor. Keri shared budgeting techniques, typical budget pitfalls and how to prevent them, and how to make the most of couponing. As a bonus and at the volunteers' request, Keri also shared an overview of Rental Counseling, Financial Literacy Class, and Homebuyer Education. Keri came well prepared and had her business cards at the ready for several of volunteers wanting to take advantage of her offerings.



Pictured are Keri Crispell, Housing Stability In-Take and Certified HUD Counselor; Heidi Powers, FGP/SCP Project Director, Foster Grandparent Chris Hoffmeyer, and Senior Companion Karen Westergard.



Save the Date: The 2024 FGP/SCP Recognition Luncheon is scheduled for Tuesday, May 7th! All NEMCSA Board members will receive an invitation as the date nears to help celebrate 49 years of Foster Grandparent and 39 years of Senior Companion volunteer service in the 12-county area.

RSVP

Retired Senior Volunteer Program Project Director, Amy Cook Otto continues to sign up new volunteers in various counties. New volunteers are starting to serve at an elementary school, food pantry, senior center, animal rehab/rescue, and more. Amy recently went to Q 100 in Grayling MI to promote NEMCSA and the Senior Volunteer Program.



Volunteer Sandra at the Roscommon County Serenity Day Lodge with client Elmer. Elmer loves to play and sing music for the other clients and volunteers at the lodge. Sandra is one of 3 RSVP volunteers who serve at the lodge. Volunteers assist clients, play music and a variety of games, go for walks outside, do crafts, and more! Sandra is a great help at the lodge going above and beyond. The clients and staff love having Sandra at the lodge. Sandra enjoys the clients and says it fills her heart to see them each week.



Program Impact

WEATHERIZATION CLIENT RESULTS!

The Weatherization Program recently had a client who was a single working mom raising 4 kids. When staff arrived at her home, it was in serious need of the program. The client was just not able to afford the necessary home maintenance and she needed a hand up. During the initial Energy Audit, NEMCSA's Weatherization Program Inspector found high levels of carbon monoxide in the home. It was affecting the family's health and they didn't know it was the cause. Staff were able to link the CO to a back-drafting domestic water heater and an unvented space heater. Once the units were replaced, many of the family health issues were gone. The program also replaced 2 doors and a broken sliding door wall with a smaller window. Staff air-sealed the drywall and wall penetrations, insulated the attic to R49 (measurement of insulation value), replaced the refrigerator, and addressed multiple other issues.

Below are some before and after pictures!



- Improved the air infiltration rate by over 25%, down to 2881 cubic feet of air movement per minute @ 50.
- Imagine, 1000 fewer basketballs per minute coming into the home. If you consider air changes per hour, the client's house went from 24 air changes per hour (ACH) to 17 ACH.
- That translates into a sizable energy savings and a sizable upgrade in the family's quality of life.

The program is actively looking for new clients!

Please send referrals to Nicole Hammond or Kristen Thoman at 989-358-4700

Staff Spotlight

THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOYALTY TO NEMCSA!

Shout out to Teacher Laurie Painter and her staff Sheena Houghten, Dakota Rudy, and Stephanie Robinson in Midland!

Below is an email from an Intermediate School District's Early Childhood Specialist about one of NEMCSA's classrooms that blends Head Start and state-funded preschool (GSRP) funds:

"I just wanted to let you know that they were so impressed with your classroom! Mischele (State Preschool Consultant) mentioned your room specifically as standing out to her and John (ISD Superintendent) brought you up at the board meeting last night. Of course, I'm not surprised, but I wanted to make sure you knew. ❤️"

NEMCSA loves having outstanding staff recognized for the meaningful and challenging work they do every day!

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Senior School Success Liaison, Nancy Kries (left) and Senior Behavior Tech, Alicia Lakin (right), on their recent promotions to Supervisory roles. In addition to their School Success Liaison and Behavior Tech roles in their schools, Nancy and Alicia are now directly supervising a team of SSP staff and they are involved in the SSP Leadership Team. Nancy and Alicia, thank you for supporting program growth!

