

Community Action

STRAIGHT TALK

A quarterly update to close friends of
Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties



Community Action
Helping People. Changing Lives.

Community Action
Partnership of Ramsey
& Washington Counties
450 Syndicate Street N
Saint Paul, MN 55104



Dear Friends,

Springtime is here and during this annual season of renewal come the promises of new and exciting opportunities. As we embrace the challenges of 2015, Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties remains strongly positioned to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those that we serve. In this edition, I invite you to reflect on Community Action's accomplishments from the previous year in which we celebrated our 50th anniversary.

Inside you will discover information on the nearly 70,000 low-income citizens Community Action served throughout Ramsey and Washington counties in 2014. The Community Action programs and services highlighted inside address the economic, educational, housing, employment, transportation, and child development needs of our service area.

The success of our agency is determined by our ability to help program participants chart a course toward self-sufficiency. It is an honor and a privilege to be able to share their achievements with you. If you'd like to know more about all that we're doing, please feel free to contact me at 651-603-5951 or at chightower@caprw.org.

With good wishes,

Clarence Hightower, Ph.D.
Executive Director



Community Action



BOARD OF DIRECTOR NEWS

Congratulations to our new Board Officers:

President: Lee Mehrkens, *Ramsey County Director/Chief Financial Officer*

Vice President: LeAndra Estis, *Leading Individuals and Families Together to End Poverty*

Treasurer: Kevin Myren, *CommonBond Communities*

Secretary: Kerri Sawyer, *Minnesota Department of Health*

Member-At-Large: Robin Madsen, *Former AFSCME Local 1842 President*

Welcome new Board members:

Patty Lilledahl, *City of Saint Paul Mayor's Office*

Ehta T. Zar, *Head Start Policy Council*



AGENCY NEWS

2014 Program Highlights

In 2014, our agency served a total of 69,544 low-income citizens partnering with 280 organizations through an array of programs and initiatives designed to reduce poverty and its impacts on people in Ramsey & Washington counties.

2014 program highlights:

Meeting basic needs through...

- **Head Start** and **Early Head Start** services providing 1,692 children with comprehensive early childhood education,
- **Energy Assistance** grants to 22,818 households helping 9,362 senior citizens maintain their independent living situation, and
- **Transitional Housing** for 6 homeless adults providing safe shelter and case management services.

Building sustainable communities by...

- **Weatherizing** 116 homes and repairing or replacing 759 unsafe heating systems,
- Getting low-income participants to their job with 59 low-interest **car loans**, and
- Helping 93 low-wage earners build assets through our **Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM)** matched savings program where;
 - **9 entrepreneurs** are starting and/or improving their small business dream;
 - **22 potential home buyers** will be able to use up to \$3,840 for first-time home buying costs; and
 - **62 students** are working on their educational goals which will allow them to be self-sufficient and provide for their families and themselves.

Empowering 500 community members through voter education and **activating** 17,708 hours from community volunteers.

Staff Highlights

Congratulations to our Executive Director, Dr. Clarence Hightower, for recently earning his Ph.D. in Urban Higher Education from Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi.

IMPACTFUL DECISIONS

Community Action Headquarters

In January of this year, the Board of Directors authorized the payoff of Community Action's debt used to finance the original purchase of the Community Action headquarters (Bigelow) building. As a result, Community Action has paid the mortgage and owns the Bigelow Building in full. This significantly strengthens Community Action's financial position and affords the agency increased flexibility in its future strategic plans.

Agency Financial Audit

Wipfli, LLP presented our official 2014 independent financial audit during the February Board of Directors meeting. It is with tremendous pride that we can report Community Action's sixth consecutive year with "no findings." Six clean audits in a row reflect the professionalism, diligence, and skill of our staff across all program areas.