

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF YOUNG PARENTS

As she was nearing the end of her junior year, Jennifer was shocked to find out she was pregnant. "I was so worried," she recalls. How was she going to continue her studies? Not to mention the fact that she was going to be a mother as she pondered all the ways her "life was about to change." A counselor at her current school referred to the AGAPE High School for pregnant and/or parenting young mothers. And, it was at AGAPE that Jennifer also learned about CAPRW Head Start, which had just opened a new center on site.

When senior year started at AGAPE, Jennifer asked the other girls about Head Start. "They talked about how attentive the teachers and staff were," she says, "it really set my mind at ease." Jennifer's daughter Madeline was born a few months later and the transition could not have been smoother for mother and baby. Jennifer quickly connected with all the teachers, and her confidence in them "made her daily life and school a little easier."

Sarah Mertz, who transferred to AGAPE as a toddler teacher, before becoming its Assistant Center Education Coordinator, always knew that she wanted to be at the AGAPE location as soon as CAPRW Head Start announced its new partnership. "This is such an important program model," she observes, "in most cases, this is trauma informed care. You have teenage girls, who naturally are scared and trying to navigate the world as both mothers and students, while still kids themselves. It can be overwhelming, but it is our responsibility to make it less so."

Mertz notes that Community Action's Whole Family strategy is another vital component to Head Start's impact at AGAPE. "Our families have many needs and this is sensitive work. Our holistic approach to services ensures that we meet these girls where they are at, and give them access to everything we possibly can, including our family advocates, public health nurse, social worker, and every other resource at our disposal."

Jennifer graduated from AGAPE HS, but is still able to keep her daughter in Head Start. She will start her postsecondary studies at St. Paul College soon, with plans to eventually transfer to Hamline University and pursue a career in criminology. "I don't know where I'd be without this program," says Jennifer. "It has made such a difference in my life. It gave me hope. Becoming a mom at such a young age was hard, but the bond that I have with Madeline is so strong. It is a love that I never could have imagined, and the experience at AGAPE has helped me learn to love myself as well."

"It is not lost on staff how important our responsibilities our here at AGAPE," reflects Mertz, "but it is equally as rewarding. We get to help instill love into the lives of these families. And, we are forever grateful that these young women trust us with their babies."



“ You have teenage girls, who naturally are scared and trying to navigate the world as both mothers and students, while still kids themselves. It can be overwhelming, but it is our responsibility to make it less so. ”

IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS



Made a total of **49,551** utility payments and **22,343** utility deposits to help individuals and families stay safe and warm in their homes.

Directly served a total of **18,933** households and **55,718** individuals.



Weatherized **175** homes increasing energy conservation and lowering utility bills, and improved the living condition of **1,154** households through essential home repairs.

Supported **8,241** individuals with disabilities and **4,877** seniors (65+) maintain an independent living situation.

Provided transportation services to **337** people, comprehensive case management support to **975** participants, and referrals to **38,605** individuals to connect them to other critical programs and services.



Conducted **1,212** home visits in supporting the health and development needs of Early Head Start children and families.

Assisted **125** families with free tax preparations to help them benefit from the EITC, CTC, and other tax credits.

Provided **1,109** children ages 0-5 with comprehensive early childhood education, health screenings, and nutritional services.



Prepared **137,331** meals to help meet the nutritional needs of Head Start children.

Involved **178** individuals in community and civic engagement initiatives including voter education and access, volunteer training, and leadership development.

Connected **4,127** people to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits.

Coached **48** adults seeking to improve their employment and increase their income.

Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties
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ANNUAL REPORT FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Statement of Financial Position

Year Ended September 30, 2021

Assets		
Cash	\$1,810,157	18%
Receivables	\$2,740,095	28%
Inventory and Other	\$35,635	0%
Prepaid Expenses, Advances	\$1,046,132	11%
Property & Equipment, Net	\$4,279,161	43%
Total Assets	\$9,911,180	100%

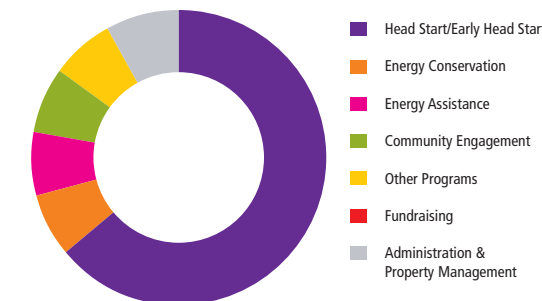
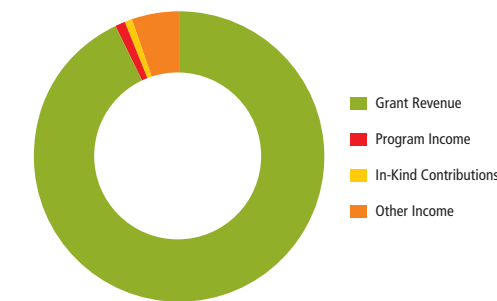
Liabilities & Net Assets		
Accounts Payable	\$946,575	10%
Accrued Expenses	\$1,941,323	20%
Deferred Revenue & Other	\$523,217	5%
Long-Term Debt	\$432,136	4%
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$4,006,479	40%
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	\$2,061,450	21%
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$9,911,180	100%

Statement of Activities

Year Ended September 30, 2020

Revenue		
Grant Revenue	\$28,333,360	92%
Program Income	\$416,750	1%
In-Kind Contributions	\$215,696	1%
Other Income	\$1,687,779	5%
Total Revenue	\$30,653,585	100%

Expenses		
Head Start/Early Head Start	\$18,921,054	64%
Energy Conservation	\$2,195,540	7%
Energy Assistance	\$2,136,295	7%
Community Engagement	\$2,002,309	7%
Other Programs	\$2,166,836	7%
Fundraising	\$44,569	0%
Administration & Property Management	\$2,349,846	8%
Total Expenses	\$29,815,449	100%
Change in Net Assets	\$838,136	



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Partnering with People to Overcome Poverty
SERVE. EDUCATE. TRANSFORM.



Community Action

A WORD FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

As 2021 came to an end, we still found ourselves caught in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. By this time, agencies like ours had already designed innovative tools and re-envisioned many of the ways we deliver services to ensure that we met the most basic, as well as new and emerging needs of our participant households across Ramsey and Washington counties. Although the world started opening up somewhat this past year to push through the proverbial “pandemic wall,” the social and economic impact that COVID has wrought on so many American families persists and will likely continue to be felt for years to come – which is why Community Action pledges to remain alert, bold, and agile in the fulfillment of our mission to lift people out of poverty.

One of the ways we helped do this during the past year was through our administration of the St. Paul – Ramsey County COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program, also known as CERA. Since its creation in July of 2021, our dedicated staff has processed and approved more than 2,900 applications covering over 15,000 months of rent and utility payments totaling over \$16 million. In addition, we enhanced and built upon our Whole Family Approach to services, which is highlighted by the participant success stories in this annual report – including two new programs: the Childhood Development Associate (CDA®) Preschool Credential Pilot Program and our AGAPE High School Head Start / Early Head Start Center.

Now as we all know, both the pandemic and a number of tragic events over the past two years have only served to exacerbate the social and economic inequities that have long persisted across America. And Minnesota remains a flash point in this struggle, not only because of the killings of George Floyd and Daunte Wright, but also in light of the fact that our metro and our state continue to maintain some of the worst racial gaps in the nation. For 57 years, our agency has been a forerunner in providing direct services and support to historically underserved and underrepresented populations. And still, we know that we must do better. Community Action has taken a number of internal steps to further expand and advance our work in the arena of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). This includes professional development and training of our staff, implementing bold and innovative program tools, and strategies to build upon current partnerships and foster new connections designed to better close those gaps and increase equity for everyone in our communities.

On a final note, it is not lost on any of us here at Community Action that our impact, our successes and the ability to fulfill our mission are dependent on each of you – our volunteers, agency supporters, program partners, key stakeholders, and the larger community. Thus, on behalf of our Board of Directors, senior management, staff, and participants, we want to express our deepest thanks for all you do in support of our neighbors.

With Appreciation,

Kevin Adams
Interim Executive Director

Nicole Frethem
Chair, Board of Directors

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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NEW PROGRAM GIVES HEAD START PARENTS THE CHANCE TO BEGIN A NEW CAREER

A LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE

Thuy struggled every day, worried about her family’s future and how she could help contribute to the household income as her husband was only receiving 20 hours per week at his job. Then one day, out of the blue, she saw a note from Head Start, where her four-year-old son was now enrolled, advertising a brand-new opportunity – the Child Development Associate (CDA®) Preschool Credential Pilot Program. A partnership between CAPRW Head Start, our Financial Opportunity Programs, and the YWCA St. Paul, the CDA pilot provides paid onsite training and professional instruction to Head Start parents interested in starting a career in Early Childhood Education.

Although a mother of two, the classroom environment was a little intimidating at first remembers Thuy. “I was pretty shy and unsure of myself. There were so many children and things were more challenging than I anticipated.” However, as the days went on, Thuy became more comfortable and learned so much from her supervisor, teachers, staff, specialists, and of course, her colleagues in the CDA cohort, including Moo who trained with her at the McDonough Head Start Center. “They are such amazing people that helped me get stronger and stronger each day,” Thuy explains. “They helped me find my way and I was able to gain the trust of the children, make them feel safe and loved, and make sure they were ready and excited to learn.”

“It was amazing to witness Ms. Thuy and Ms. Moo develop right before our eyes,” says Lisa Tjepkes, who began the school year as their direct supervisor before being promoted to Center Education Coordinator at McDonough, “They blossomed and they accomplished so much in such a short time, which was extra challenging considering we were still in the throes of the pandemic.” Tjepkes, who has 21 years of experience in early childhood education, also notes just how extraordinary the CDA credential program can be.

“It’s literally life changing for these parents, who get to earn a living wage during training and transition right into a career as an Assistant Head Start Teacher. The potential impact is multi-generational. And, not only do they learn to become teachers, it can also help them to become better parents. Which is critical since we always say in Head Start that ‘parents are the child’s first teacher.’”



Thuy agrees completely with those sentiments. “My life, our family’s life has changed for the better, hopefully forever.” Moreover, she cites how valuable both Community Action’s Financial Opportunities Programs and other services have been, providing her and her cohort with financial literacy training, employment coaching, and access to other critical services such as Energy Assistance.

Now, not only have she and her family begun charting a course toward financial stability, but Thuy is using the knowledge and tools she’s learned through the CDA pilot at home as well. Her experience has also motivated her to aim higher. “My life is so much better now and I want to further my education and be an inspiration to my kids.”

DREAMS DO COME TRUE

“The first time I thought about teaching was when I was 8 or 9 years old,” remembers Moo, “it was my dream to become a teacher.” At the same time, an aspiration such as this seemed like a million miles away for a young girl living in a refugee camp in Thailand. And, although she made it to the United States and eventually started her own family, placing one child in Head Start and another in Early Head Start, teaching still seemed like an unattainable goal to Moo.

“I never thought my English would be good enough,” she explains, “I didn’t think I’d get the chance to do anything else with my life. Certainly not becoming a teacher.” That all changed when Moo learned about CAPRW’s Child Development Associate (CDA®) Preschool Credential Pilot Program. Albeit anxious, a little afraid, and unsure of what the future held, Moo knew she “had to try.” So, she reached out and signed up with Susan Buckman, Employment Service Specialist with the Financial Opportunity Programs, who also became Moo’s case manager throughout the duration of the program.

Once enrolled, Moo could hardly contain her excitement. Still, she worried, not only about her English, but also her limited computer proficiency. Moo struggled to connect with the kids at first and even considered dropping out. But she was determined to succeed, and soon, her English began to improve as did her other skills. Likewise, Moo summoned the courage to be more independent. “Instead of always asking for help, I started to try new things,” says Moo, “to see if I could figure it out on my own.” Not only did she find the process liberating, but Moo reveals that it made her feel stronger, happier, and more confident than ever before. “I was so proud of myself.”

When considering the progress made by both Moo and Thuy during their training, Buckman observes, “They came in excited about the opportunity, but also shy and a with lot of unknowns. As time went on, I started to see an eagerness to learn and a comfort in what they were doing. They both have the skills, compassion and loving nature to be in early childhood. This was not an easy program for them as they juggled work, study time, and family life throughout. But they excelled and CAPRW Head Start is lucky to have Moo and Thuy as teachers!”

After graduation, Moo reflected back on her life’s journey and the days when she first thought about being a teacher. “My dream came true,” she declares. But Moo wants to remind everyone she’s not done. Just like Thuy, her CDA colleague, Moo wants to further her education. And, not just for herself and her family. “Becoming a teacher was important to me,” notes Moo, “Now, I can make a difference not only for my family, but I can help other parents and families. I can help my friends, and I can help the community. I am looking forward to the future.”



ENERGY PROGRAMS HELP LOCAL HOMEOWNER OVERCOME HARDSHIPS

A career in the minor leagues definitely left some wear and tear on Robert’s knees and ankles. However, it was a serious car accident in 1994 that contributed most to the countless surgeries that he’s had to endure over the years. Wanting to stay close to baseball, he helped run local Babe Ruth and Little League organizations in the Twin Cities, and even became an umpire. “I just needed to be around it,” Robert explains, “the smells, the sounds. It’s just home to me.”

Considering his injuries, Robert’s doctors wondered why he continued to punish himself. But again, baseball meant so much to him. Eventually, after another surgery, he was forced to take a year off. And then, right when he was ready to resume his administrative responsibilities and his duties on the field, COVID-19 arrived, and baseball seasons everywhere were cancelled. He found work here and there, and still had his job as Alcohol Compliance Officer at US Bank Stadium. But that was only for Vikings games and the occasional concert. Eventually, it became difficult to make ends meet. And, when he received a utility shut off notice, Robert was able to connect with Community Action’s Energy Assistance Program.

After Energy Assistance helped Robert catch up on his utility bills, Community Action’s Energy Conservation program went to work, repairing his furnace, adding much needed insulation, fixing some plumbing issues, and providing other critical weatherization services, all designed to increase energy efficiency, save money, and make the home as safe as possible. These are all things that Robert notes he “could have never afforded” himself.

“Not only did they keep my lights on, but they did an amazing job improving the comfort, reliability, and economics of my home and all of its systems. It’s been a blessing.”

Earlier this year, Robert had the opportunity to share his story with Congresswoman Betty McCollum, and affirm just how important programs like Energy Assistance and Energy Conservation are important to people like him. “I can’t thank Community Action enough for all they’ve done for me,” says Robert, “not only did they keep my lights on, but they did an amazing job improving the comfort, reliability, and economics of my home and all of its systems. It’s been a blessing.”