

2016 Annual Report

West

Central

Minnesota

Communities

Action, Inc.



Helping People. Changing Lives.

community
Action

PARTNERSHIP

WEST CENTRAL MN COMMUNITIES ACTION, INC.

“Helping People. Changing Lives

Dear Board Members, Employees, and Friends of West Central MN Communities Action, Inc.,

We are proud to share our FY2016 Annual Report with you. We have highlighted our programs, outcomes, and funding of the past fiscal year. As you will see, it has been a very busy year bringing services to those that most need it.

In January 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a War on Poverty and through the Office of Economic Opportunity, introduced initiatives designed to improve education, health, skills, jobs, and access to economic resources for those struggling to make ends meet. 52 years later, the WCMCA, Inc. mission “dedicated to reducing the effect of poverty, helping people achieve self-sufficiency, and improving the quality of rural life” is strong, and the Board of Directors and staff are committed to fulfilling the mission each and every day.

This is the foundation of our success. We have 15 Board members across our five-county service area, and 123 full and part-time employees providing services to children and families across western MN. Our services to clients are strengthened when we work with community partners – public health, school districts, human services, energy vendors, construction companies, child care providers, and many community businesses.

WCMCA, Inc. is currently completing an in-depth strategic planning process – which will enable our Agency to be innovative as we strive to meet the needs of our clientele. We will be working hard over the next year in implementing programming to meet the needs of rural MN!

Thank you to our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, and community partners for your work towards the success of West Central MN Communities Action, Inc.

Missy Becker-Cook

Missy Becker-Cook
Chief Executive Officer

Cody Rogahn

Cody Rogahn
Board Chairperson

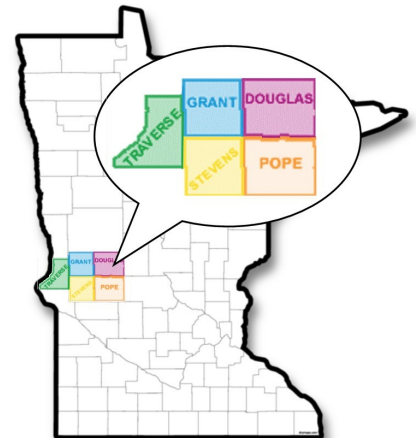
Carol Boyer

Carol Boyer
Chief Financial Officer



Representative Erin Murphy visited WCMCA to learn about programming and the needs of west central Minnesota.

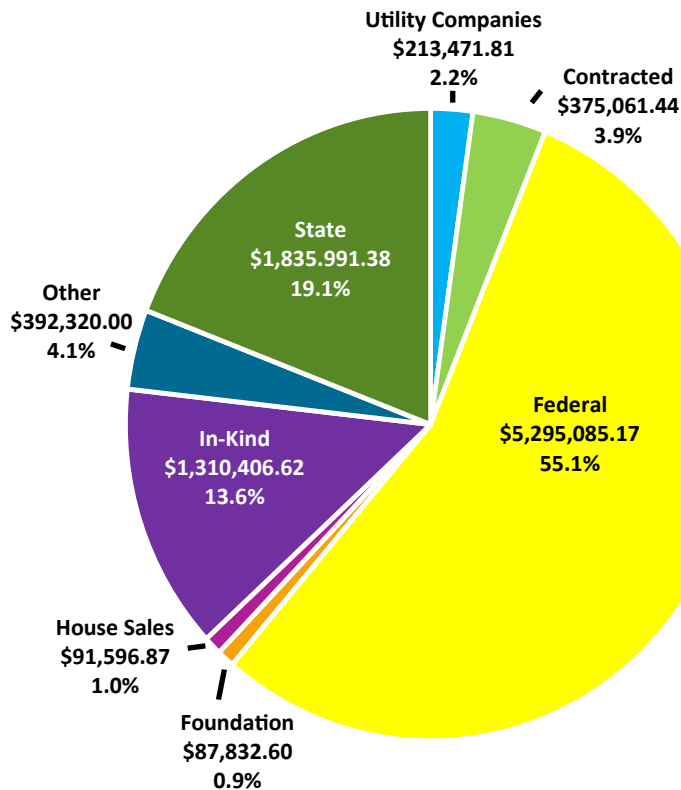
Pictured (L to R):
Rep Murphy, Carol Boyer,
Missy Becker-Cook and
Mandy Braaten



WCMCA MISSION STATEMENT

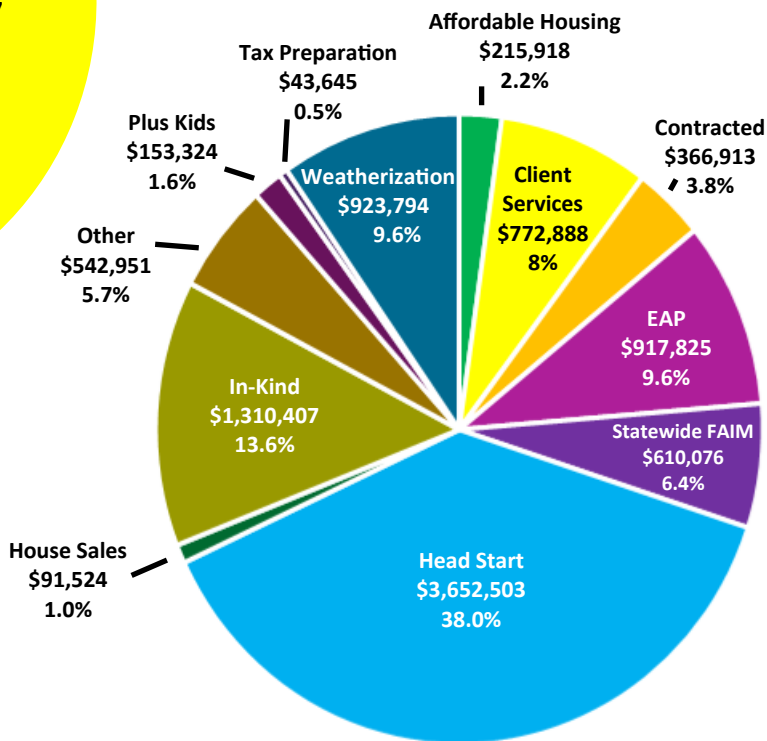
West Central MN Communities Action, Inc., a resource agency, is dedicated to reducing the effects of poverty and helping people to achieve self-sufficiency, and improving the quality of rural life.

UNAUDITED TOTAL REVENUES 10/01/15—09/30/16



- The primary heat and crisis payments for Energy Assistance are generated through the State of Minnesota, and not part of the financial statements.
- Through the Energy Assistance Program, \$2.5 million were distributed directly to energy vendors in our service territory to assist with households' heating and electric costs.
- Crisis assistance gives immediate help to those in emergency situations. This past year, 1,623 households received crisis benefits totaling \$706,000 paid directly to their energy vendors.

UNAUDITED TOTAL EXPENDITURES 10/01/15—09/30/16



2016 FUNDING

THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY ACTION

Community Action changes lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live.

We are about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

HEAD START

WCMCA Head Start Accomplishments ending May 2016

- **Enrollment:**

- ◇ Served 401 children in our preschool program (ages 3-4);
- ◇ 54 children in our Early Head Start program (ages 0-3);
- ◇ Including, 106 children diagnosed with disabilities and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) through their local school district.



- **Education Services:**

- ◇ We had over 90% average daily attendance in all of our classrooms this past year.
- ◇ The 4-year-old children enrolled in our program met or exceeded expectations for kindergarten readiness by 92% in all of these school readiness areas: Physical Development and Health, Social and Emotional Development; Approaches to Learning, Cognitive and General Knowledge, Language and Literacy.
- We help children succeed by linking curriculum and assessment using observation-based assessment information to individualize children's learning.
- Received a 4-star rating from Minnesota Parent Aware, because we demonstrate that we meet quality indicators related to curriculum and assessment.
- **Parent Engagement:** We had 90% of our families entering into family partnership agreements and setting goals as a result.



- **Health Services:**

- ◇ 100% - 451 children had completed their physical exams;
- ◇ 100% - 451 children had immunizations/review of up-to-date;
- ◇ 100% - 451 children completed a social-emotional screening;
- ◇ 100% - 451 children completed a developmental screening; and
- ◇ 100% - 451 children completed a dental exam (starting no later than 12 months of age).



4-Year Old School Readiness Goal Outcomes

Overall Program Averages:

4 Year Old Children in Head Start 2016/17-94.1% ready for kindergarten.

4 Year Old Children in Head Start 2014/15 – 93.3% ready for kindergarten.

4 Year Old Children in Head Start 2013/14 – 90.7% ready for kindergarten.

Domains We Assess	Total % Meeting & Exceeding Expectations 2015/2016	Total % Meeting & Exceeding Expectations 2014/2015	Total % Meeting & Exceeding Expectations 2013/2014
Physical Development & Health	97%	97%	94.8%
Social & Emotional Development	92%	91%	86%
Approaches to Learning	96%	96%	90.6%
Cognitive & General Knowledge	92%	88%	87.8%
Language & Literacy	93.5%	94.6%	94.4%

COOKING MATTERS

Cooking Matters is a hands-on nutrition program that promotes and teaches Head Start families how to prepare healthy and tasty meals on a limited budget.

Each course is taught by a local chef, Don Sorby, who volunteers his time and talents and also a Community Nutrition Educator from the University of Minnesota Extension. Additional volunteers work behind the scenes assisting with shopping, bagging groceries, and assisting with the classes to ensure that the course is a success.

About the Courses: Each course meets one time per week for six weeks. Courses give participants hands-on cooking experience and valuable advice on making the healthiest food choices possible with limited resources. Participants are given a bag of groceries to take home so they can practice what they have just learned...and at the same time provide a nutritious, home-cooked meal for their family!

Goals of the program:

- Set a Healthy Example
- Choosing Fruits, Vegetables, and Whole Grains
- Healthy Starts At Home
- Power of Planning Meals in Advance
- Shopping Smart
- Recipe for Success

Cooking Matters is funded and supported by United Way of Douglas & Pope County, University of MN Extension, EC Thrive, Cooking Matters Minnesota and West Central MN Communities Action-Heat Start. WCMCA Head Start started Cooking Matters in the fall of 2012. Since 2012, WCMCA Head Start has hosted Cooking Matters in Douglas and Pope counties aligning one course in the fall and one course in the spring.



Pictured above: Chef Don Sorby demonstrating proper cutting techniques of a whole chicken.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE

A program designed to assist income eligible households with the high cost of heating their homes.

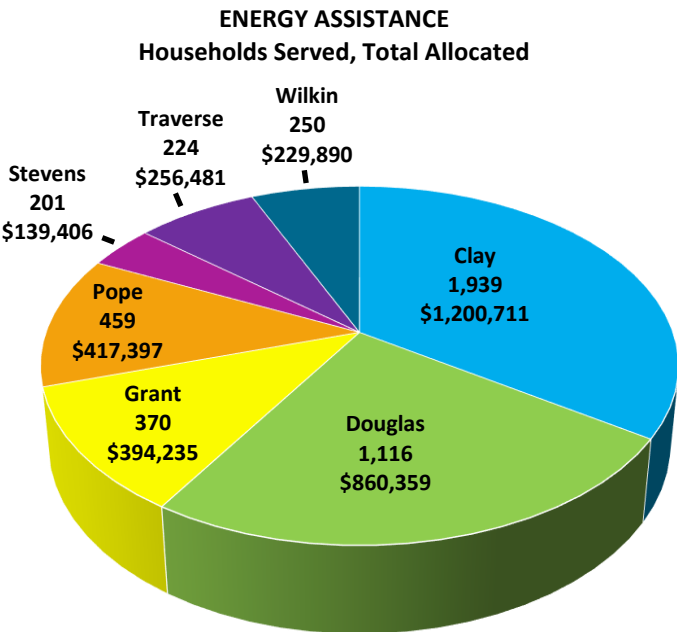
This program is available in the seven service counties of Clay, Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin.

Last year, our agency received 5,062 applications, of which, 4,559 were eligible for assistance.

Through the energy assistance program, \$2.5 million dollars was distributed directly to energy vendors in our service territory to assist with households’ heating and electric costs.

Crisis assistance gives immediate help to those in emergency situations. This past year, 1,623 households received crisis benefits totaling \$706,000 paid directly to their energy vendors.

Energy Related Repair Program provides furnace related repair. This past year, 212 households received assistance with furnace repair and replacements through the Energy Related Repair Program. Of the assistance, there were 53 total furnace replacements.



WEATHERIZATION

The weatherization program helps income eligible households improve the comfort level of their homes by making energy-saving improvements.

Improvements to be made are determined from an energy audit of the home and weatherization priorities set by the state. Improvements may include: insulation, air sealing, health and safety measures and mechanical system repairs or replacements.

CIP, EAP / WX, DOE & PROPANE

Households Served, Total Allocated

CIP	155	\$169,351
EAP / WX	54	\$120,797
DOE	54	\$115,769
PROPANE	7	\$17,728

CONSERVATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS (CIP)

The following utilities in our service area provide assistance to clients to complete weatherization-type improvements to eligible households: *Ottertail Power, Xcel Energy, Great Plains Natural Gas, Lake Region Electric, Agralite Electric, Red River Valley Cooperative Power, Wild Rice Electric Cooperative, Runestone Electric Association, City of Hawley, Minnesota Energy Resource Center, Halstad Public Utilities, Moorhead Public Services, and Centerpoint Energy Companies.* Repairs include A/C Tune-ups, mechanical system replacements, new Energy Star appliances, along with energy conservation kits.

HOUSING

Small Cities program is a rehabilitation program for owner occupied houses. Assistance is in the form of a 0% interest-deferred loan. This loan is a 10-year forgivable, 10% for each full year. Counties benefit by keeping viable housing stock, as well as the influx of funds for contractors, plumbers, electricians, etc.

• Campbell	8 households	\$159,992
• Breckenridge	13 households	\$313,007
• Verndale	10 households	\$129,493
• Elbow Lake	9 households	\$182,450
• Clarissa	7 households	\$123,406

MURL (MN Urban and Rural Homesteading Program) is a first-time home buyer program for low-to-moderate income families who cannot obtain standard financing. Homes are financed by WCMCA, Inc. with zero down, no interest contract for deed. West Central currently has 33 MURL homes in the program.

WCMCA, Inc. employs two Lead Risk Assessors who conduct a **lead inspection**, which is a surface-by-surface test for lead paint or a lead risk assessment that tells you if there are any lead hazards present in your home. This year, WCMCA conducted 46 lead risk assessments and 53 lead clearances.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- WCMCA Works with the MN Dept of Corrections to build new affordable housing for low-to-moderate income people.
- The homes are built by minimum security inmates supervised by a state employee who is a 25-30 year veteran carpenter.
- All homes are inspected by a licensed building official and come standard with a 2-10 home buyers warranty.
- Other projects completed by the work crew over the last year were:
 - ◊ Completed the courthouse remodel in Douglas County;
 - ◊ Built 2 homes for the Douglas County HRA (estimated value of \$185,000);
 - ◊ Started home construction for Glenwood Development Foundation in Glenwood and will complete the construction late 2016; and
 - ◊ Completed the Traverse County Social Services remodel project in Wheaton.

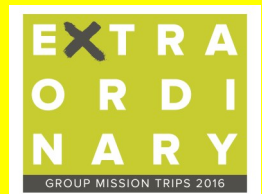
GROUP CARES

During the week of June 26-July 2, 2016, over 200 volunteers worked on 24 homes doing exterior and interior painting, building decks and wheelchair ramps, weatherizing homes, repairing porches and completing many other home projects. The projects completed brought over \$19,000 in materials to our communities that helped families in need.

In addition, there are economic benefits to the community as well: volunteers and staff purchased gasoline, food, beverages, and other miscellaneous items during their visit. Over the course of the week, 5,580 volunteer hours were provided to our communities, and the mission groups brought with them over 1,400 items of food that was donated to the Grant County Food Shelf.



- Served 26 families; 47 individuals
- Painted 24 homes (22 exterior, 2 interior)
- 5 Wheelchair ramps
- 3 Porches
- 3 Steps
- 2 Weatherization projects
- Several miscellaneous projects and chore services



FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Phoenix Apartments

In 2013, West Central MN Communities Action Inc. was approached by the Board of Directors of Wings Supportive Family Services to undertake the transitional housing programs, as well as their supervised visitation center, "PLUS Kids". WINGS was looking to disband and wanted to ensure that services were able to continue. They requested that West Central MN Communities Action, Inc. take on the transitional housing building, as well as other services. WCMCA's Board of Directors agreed that there was a definite need for emergency housing, and that the housing units needed to be preserved in Alexandria. A WCMCA, Inc. board member commented that the programs 'hit the sweet spot of Community Action'.

WCMCA, Inc. then began the process of securing both the building and the accompanying state and federal funding to continue the operation of the facility and provide supportive housing services to the households currently enrolled in the units. WCMCA, Inc. sought the assistance of a partner, Three Rivers Community Action, who has extensive experience in this type of property acquisition. With the assistance of Three Rivers Community Actions, WCMCA, Inc. applied and received a forgivable loan through Minnesota Housing to do extensive rehabilitation to the building, now titled the "Phoenix." Ownership of the property was secured in December of 2015. The renovations were completed by WCMCA, Inc. Department of Correction's Institution Community Work Crew(ICWC) - WCMCA, Inc. partners with the Department of Corrections for a crew leader and low-risk inmates to learn the construction trade, this crew completed the renovations on the building. The renovations included repair to all eight units, sheetrock and painting to all apartments, new flooring, new kitchens and appliances for each unit, a newly renovated and furnished community room, new playground and paving of the parking lot. The Phoenix is currently at full capacity, housing 8 families that otherwise would not have their housing needs met.

The Phoenix is being managed by Douglas County HRA, and WCMCA, Inc. has a full-time staff person on site for case management for the eight families who reside at the Phoenix.

PLUS Kids (Parents Love Us Kids) is designed to provide a positive, neutral, and safe environment for the exchange or supervised visitation of children by separated parents in cases where visitation would otherwise be difficult due to issues of conflict or abuse.

FATHER'S RESOURCE PROGRAM helps low-income, unmarried parents establish custody and parenting time. This is critical to building child/parent relationships and promoting positive development in children by motivating both parents to be active in their children's lives. This program also holds monthly law clinics with seven attorneys donating their time - 96 parents were helped this year.

FREE TAX PREP and e-filing to low-income individuals and families at the tax sites in Alexandria, Elbow Lake, Glenwood, Morris and Wheaton. WCMCA offers free tax preparation services to families who earn less than \$50,000 per year and individuals who earn less than \$30,000. Free Tax Prep volunteers do not prepare self-employment or small business tax returns.



Family & Community Services staff are located at:

WCMCA Satellite Office

503 Hawthorne St
Alexandria, MN 56308
320-304-3458

PLUS Kids

818 Elm St
Alexandria, MN 56308
320-219-6446

Douglas County Social Services

809 Elm St
Alexandria, MN 56308
320-762-3031

FAMILY HOMELESS PREVENTION & ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (FHPAP) serves singles or families that are or near to being homeless. The program can pay for deposit, rent, mortgage and/or utilities, and assists with short-to-mid-term case management.

EMERGENCY SHELTER PROGRAM (ESP) serves singles or families that are homeless. The program can pay for a short hotel stay.

LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM (LTH) provides persons, including individuals, unaccompanied youth or families with children who lack a permanent place to live continuously for a year or more or were homeless at least four times in the past three years. The households that are enrolled in the Long-Term Homelessness case management receive services that include some planning, budgeting, goal-setting, and referrals to helpful resources in the community.

HOUSE KEYS (Short-Term, Rapid Rehousing Case Management & Rent Subsidy) was designed to lend a helping hand to families in need. The program is available to families who are currently homeless (by state definition). The families must have custody of the children at least 50% of the time. Participants in House Keys are responsible for 30% of their monthly income towards their total rent. The difference between the total rent and their portion will be paid by our program for as long as the client is

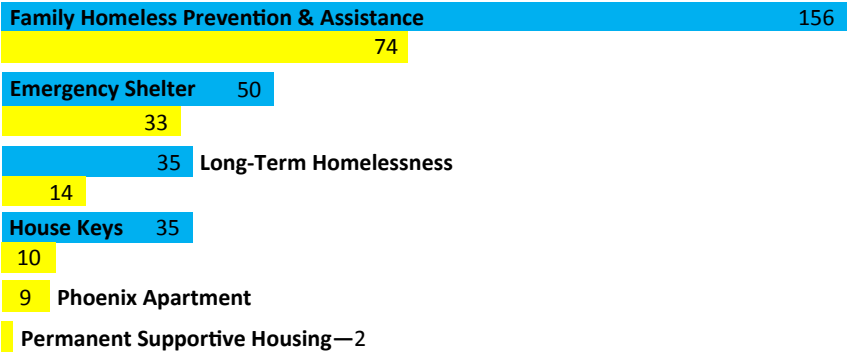
eligible for the service. This program focuses on four (4) different goal areas; one of them specifically being to develop the ability and resources that will allow the family to take over full rental payments within six (6) months.

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (PSH) program provides long-term stabilization services to families that are homeless and have a family member with a diagnosed disability. These households agree to pay 30% of their gross adjusted income and the program subsidizes the rest.

HOUSING COUNSELING PROGRAMS including Pre-Purchase Homebuyer Counseling, Home-Stretch Education Workshops, and Foreclosure Prevention Counseling have served a total of 84 clients.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAMS

People Served, Households Served



The first Cardboard Brigade event was held during National Hunger and Homeless Awareness week, November 13-19, 2015. This event was held to help spread awareness of the issue of homelessness in our community. The Echo Press and Voice of Alexandria highlighted the event in the paper and social media. We received many comments and great feedback from community members.



The Family and Community Services Department hosted “Wake Up Alexandria” on September 16, 2016.



FAIM

WCMCA serves as the grantee for the Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) program. In 2016, this included 24 partnering agencies across the state of Minnesota.

FAIM offers low-to-middle-income working individuals the opportunity to receive a three-to-one match on earned income they are able to put into FAIM savings accounts. If the saver is able to save \$960 over the course of two years, FAIM matches that with \$2,880. This \$3,840 can be used to purchase their first home, go back to school, or start or improve a small business.

Paired with their savings, FAIM also provides twelve hours of Financial Literacy classes, ten hours of asset-specific training, and one-on-one financial coaching to help the saver decrease their debt load, build wealth, increase their assets, and increase economic self-sufficiency.

In 2016, 332 accounts were opened across the state and \$61,827 was put into savings. Asset purchases totaled 457 payouts throughout the year totaling \$555,629 including in savings and match. WCMCA provided oversight of more than one thousand accounts, including state, federal, and individualized reporting.

FAIM is funded by the Asset for Independence, a federal grant from the Office of Community Service, and a state grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity. In 2015, the legislature approved the state grant to include coaching dollars to assist partnering agencies in funding the one-on-one coaching dollars. Partnering agencies must also raise internal funding to offer financial coaching.



**FAIM PROVIDER NETWORK
RECEIVING THE 2015 BEST PRACTICE AWARD**

WCMCA also offers FAIM as a direct service in the counties of Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens and Traverse counties. In 2016, WCMCA opened five FAIM accounts and provided financial education and coaching to 33 enrolled savers. \$741.66 in deposits were made.

In this fiscal year, we had:

- 24 partner agencies offering FAIM;
- 1,281 accounts open in three separate projects;
- Total earned income in savings accounts—
\$1,520,886.35;
- Assets:
 - ◇ 152 savers purchased their first-time home
 - ◇ 182 savers continued their education (post-secondary)
 - ◇ 96 savers started or expanded a business

MNSure

For the fourth year, WCMCA staff have offered MNSure Navigation services. MNSure, the healthcare exchange website, allows households the opportunity to apply for public assistance with health insurance. This includes the public healthcare programs Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare, as well as the federal tax subsidies that can be applied to the monthly health insurance premiums. WCMCA's MNSure Navigators work with people one-on-one with their healthcare application in person or trouble-shoot over the phone. This includes questions on income, requests for documentation or help them to understand the costs and coverage when choosing a health insurance plan.

Since 2013, WCMCA has helped 810 households utilize the healthcare exchange to apply for financial assistance and enroll in a health insurance plan. 298 households utilized Navigator services in 2016.



FOOD ASSISTANCE

In an effort to alleviate hunger in our communities, WCMCA focused on three types of food assistance initiatives in 2016: SNAP Outreach, Mobile Food Drops, and WE-Haul Groceries.

SNAP Outreach: WCMCA staff provides community education, eligibility screenings, and application assistance for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The SNAP program provides low-income households with monthly financial assistance to purchase food. Because these benefits are carried on an electronic benefits card, the funds can be used at local grocery stores with discretion. While these funds are administered by each county, the SNAP program brings federal dollars into our local economies.

In 2016, WCMCA reached out to 9,650 households, screened 681 households for eligibility, assisted 90 households in obtaining and completing the application, and helped five households recertify for program benefits to help them feed their families.



Mobile Food Drops: WCMCA seeks partnerships in communities throughout the service area to provide a truckload of food on a single day to be distributed to those in need. In 2016, WCMCA continued to partner with the Community Health Auxiliary, Grant County offices, International Order of the Odd Fellows in Herman, and others to offer a Drop in Elbow Lake in January. 178 people received 7,700 pounds of food, including 28 home-delivered food boxes.

Through the summer months, WCMCA partnered with Bremer Bank, Morris Area School FFA and Student Council, Stevens County Food Shelf, and other Morris area businesses and

organizations. The three drops provided 1,594 people with 62,723 pounds of food, including 60 home-delivered boxes to senior apartment complexes. This averaged 100 pounds of food per household per drop.

WE-Haul Groceries: In 2016, WCMCA launched WE-Haul Groceries in partnership with Darrel's Full Service Foods, the Grant County Developmental Achievement Center, and Hoffman community volunteers. The service focused on providing home-delivered groceries to those who may have difficulty in getting groceries due to age, illness, injury, or surgery. In 2016, 55 volunteers donated 99 of hours and 216 in miles to provide 151 home-deliveries to those in need. WE-Haul Groceries was funded in part by a Live Well At Home Grant from the Department of Human Services.



2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

92% 4-year-old children enrolled in Head Start met or exceeded kindergarten readiness



WCMCA began offering Renting 101 classes, and currently has 12 enrollees

212 households received assistance with furnace repair and **53** of those were total furnace replacements



PLUS Kids conducted **1,194** parenting times and **1,536** safe exchanges



548 households received benefits screening and application assistance

Parent



donated **13,281** hours to the Head Start Program



The WCMCA Tax Program assisted **596** taxpayers in receiving **\$691,997**



had **25** participants



451 children completed and up-to-date physical exams, immunizations and dentals



234 people were helped by **MNsure** navigators

Website
www.wcmca.org
Facebook
West Central MN
Communities Action, Inc.

“Helping People. Changing Lives.”

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