



WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA  
***Communities Action***

**2021: ANNUAL REPORT**

**HELPING PEOPLE. CHANGING LIVES.**

## ***COMMUNITY ACTION PROMISE***

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.



# OUR MISSION & VISION

WCMCA

**PARTNERING TO BUILD COMMUNITY AND EMPOWER PEOPLE TO  
OVERCOME POVERTY AND ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.**

## VISION

**PARTNERING TO END POVERTY IN RURAL MINNESOTA**

### **WCMCA LEADERSHIP TEAM**

**Missy Becker–Cook**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Valerie Arnquist**  
Head Start Director

**Heather Carlson**  
Fiscal Services Director

**Andrea Goeden**  
Energy Assistance Director

**Heather Molesworth**  
Family and Community  
Services Director

**Joe Niehaus**  
Housing Director

**Gene Wyttenback**  
Weatherization Director

**Taanna Henningsen**  
Human Resources Coordinator

**Danie St. John**  
Coordinator of Administration

### **EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**Donny Wohlers — Chair**  
Stevens County, Co Commissioner

**Teresa Gustafson — Vice Chair**  
Traverse County, Low-Income Rep

**Dave Salberg — Treasurer**  
Traverse County, Co Commissioner

**Al Glaeseman — Secretary**  
Douglas County, Low-Income Rep

### **BOARD MEMBERS**

**Jessica Boyer**  
Douglas County, Private Sector

**Marlene Cihlar**  
Pope County, Low-Income Rep

**Keith Englund**  
Douglas County, Co Commissioner

**Ken Johnson**  
Grant County, Co Commissioner

**Robin McNamar**  
Grant County, Low-Income Rep

**Hannah Michaelson**  
Stevens County, Low-Income Rep

**Janel Mendoza**  
Pope County, Private Sector

**Michelle Rinke**  
Traverse County, Private Sector

**Cody Rogahn**  
Pope County, Co Commissioner

**Bob Staples**  
Stevens County, Private Sector

**Stella Troszczynski**  
Grant County, Private Sector





## A LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

### Dear Board members, colleagues, staff and friends of West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc.:

Thank you for taking the time to learn about our Agency in our Annual Report, and the impacts we have made in our rural communities in 2021. In the following pages, you will read about many highlights and how we managed the needs and answered the call to help during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2021 proved to be a year where flexibility and adaptability were key words. The new experience of social distancing and sheltering in place resulted in adaptations for us at West Central MN Communities Action, Inc. We never closed our doors during the pandemic, we were open and available to meet clients' needs. We experienced a surge in needs in all of our programming – there were many clients who were without income during the pandemic and that left a great need for help to meet basic needs. The Board of Directors and Staff members at WCMCA, Inc. answered the call for help in so many ways – and we are so proud to work with all of them. We are proud to share our results with you!

For 56 years, WCMCA, Inc. has supported people living in poverty with respect, care, and compassion. As we write this, we are seeing a light at the end of the tunnel (*we hope*) with COVID-19 cases dropping significantly. Life seems to be getting a little more back to normal.

In 2022, WCMCA, Inc. has embarked on a strategic planning process to aid us in growth and carry us into the next five years. Staff at WCMCA, Inc. live our mission of “Partnering to build community and empower people to overcome poverty and achieve their full potential.” We held strong to the spirit and hope that drives our network to improve communities and make America a better place to live.

Thank you to our Board of Director’s, staff members, and funders in supporting WCMCA, Inc. and working beside us to help people help themselves and each other.

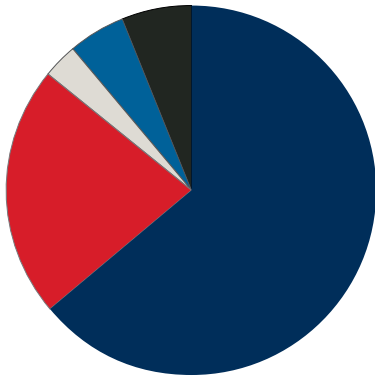
**Missy Becker-Cook**  
*Chief Executive Officer*

**Donny Wahlers**  
*Board Chair*

————— **HELPING PEOPLE. CHANGING LIVES.** —————

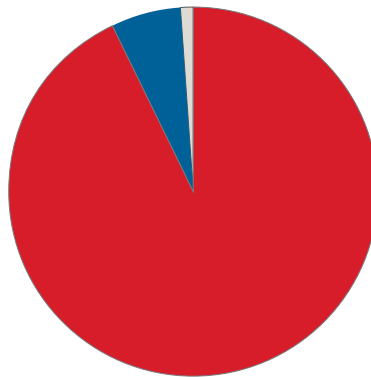
# FINANCIALS

## A YEAR IN REVIEW



### REVENUE

- Federal Grants – 64%
- State Grants – 22%
- Sales / Fees – 3%
- In-Kind Contributions – 5%
- Other – 6%

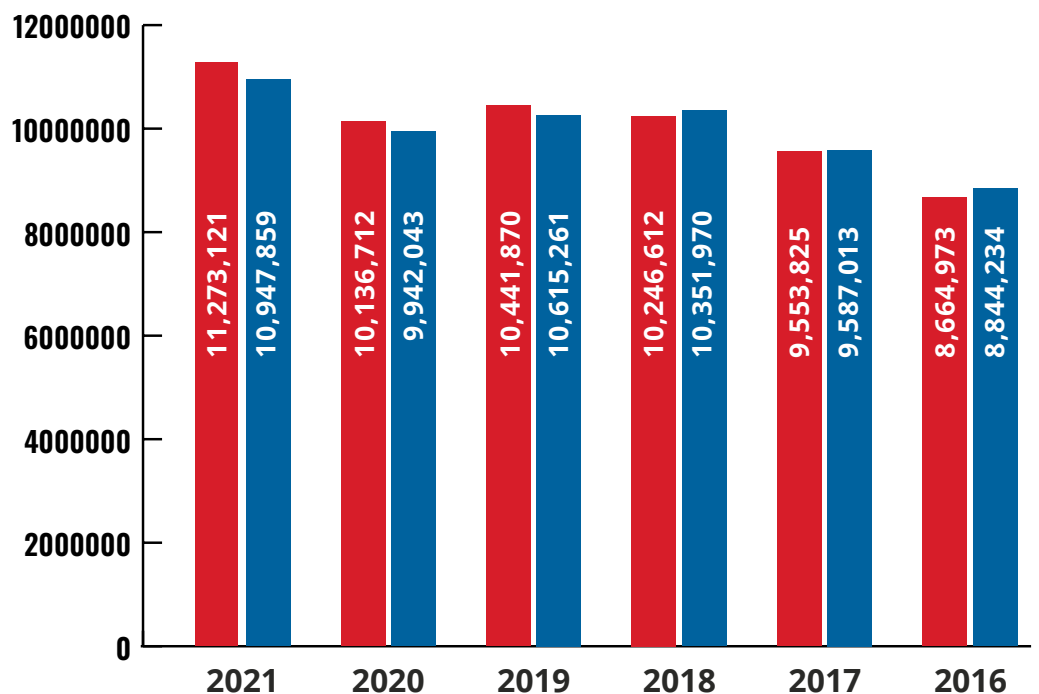


### FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

- Program Services – 93%
- Management & General – 6%
- Fundraising – 1%

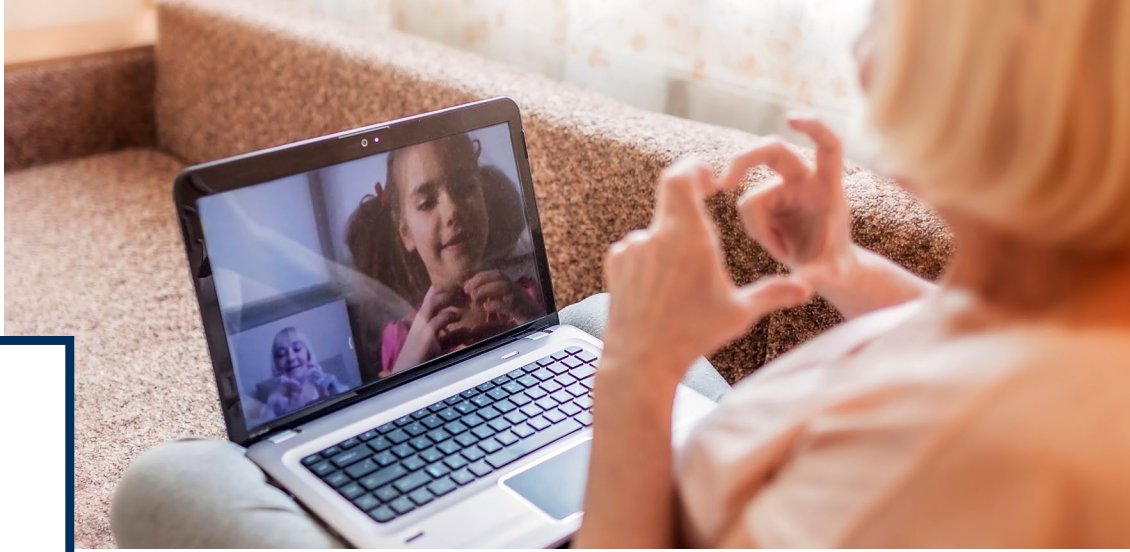
### REVENUE VS. EXPENSES

- Revenue
- Expenses



WCMCA received a clear audit with no significant findings for the 15th year in a row!

## HOUSING ASSISTANCE



Offering a full spectrum of housing services, from emergency housing and rent assistance, to rehab and new single family home construction and many services in between

# 340

**HOUSEHOLDS ASSISTED WITH RENT**

Both short- and long-term programs

# 13

**HOUSEHOLDS USED PRE-PURCHASE HOMEBUYER COUNSELING**

# 2

**NEW HOMES BUILT BY THE ICW CREW**

## COMMUNITY LAND TRUST



A Community Land Trust, providing affordable homeownership, buys or receives donated land and builds new homes and/ or acquires and rehabilitates exiting homes, and makes these homes available for sale to limited-income homebuyers, writing down the purchase price to an affordable level through the use of public and/ or private subsidies.

The CLT sells the home at an affordable price to an eligible, qualified homebuyer household, but retains ownership of the land parcel on which the home sits, leasing the parcel to the homeowner through a 99-year, inheritable, renewable ground lease.

The West Central Community Land Trust Program will have placed:

**3 HOMES INTO THE TRUST BY SPRING '22**

**9 ADDITIONAL HOMES THROUGH 2023**

These homes include new construction, acquisition rehab, and two Habitat for Humanity homes.



## WCMCA CHAP FUNDING

### COVID-19 HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**A program to provide housing assistance payments to help prevent eviction and homelessness, and maintain housing stability for eligible renters and homeowners during COVID-19.**

**Eligible expenses include mortgage, rent, contract for deed payments, manufactured home park lot rents and payments, utility payments, and homeowner association fees.**

The WCMCA Family and Community Services Department executed the COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) grant awarded through Minnesota Housing Finance Agency.







West Central staff reviewed applications from individuals and families requesting assistance, verified eligibility, and processed payments for eligible expenses on behalf of households.

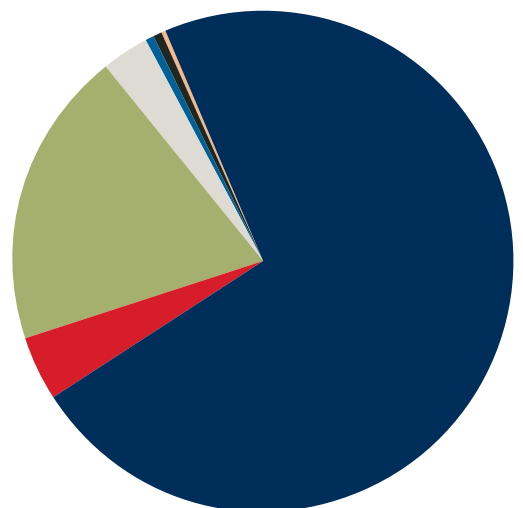
To be eligible, households were required to:

- Have income at or below 300% of federal poverty guidelines, with preference given for those at or below 200% of federal poverty guidelines
- Have eligible expenses accrued after March 1, 2020, that were past due and accrued prior to December 7, 2020
- Were unable to make one or more payments owed because of the public health emergency due to unemployment, illness, or another COVID-19 related issue.

**489**  
REQUESTS  
TOTALING  
**\$637,681**

#### SPENDING BREAKDOWN

	Rent – \$461,390
	Mortgage – \$26,101
	Utilities – \$122,504
	Contract for Deed – \$19,180
	Lot Rent – \$4,947
	Association Fees – \$3,322
	Homeowner's Insurance – \$228

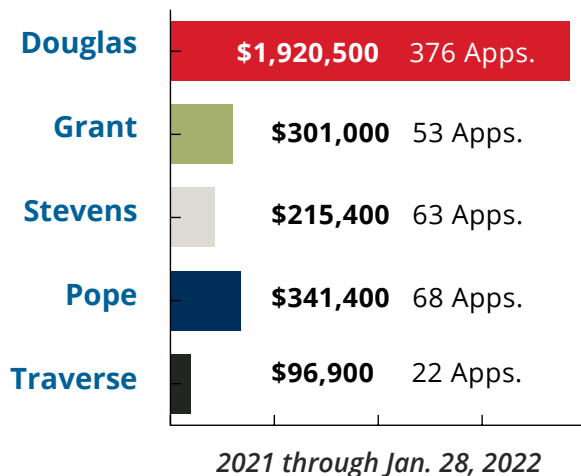




## COVID-19 EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**Provided direct assistance for renter households that experienced or were at risk of financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic to help prevent homelessness and maintain housing stability**

**Eligible expenses included rent, utilities and home energy costs.**



Eligible applicants included renter households with incomes at or below 80% area median income and who have experienced financial hardship through the COVID-19 outbreak and can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Family and Community Services (FCS) Housing Department was a field partner and provided culturally appropriate outreach and navigational services to renter households who were least likely to apply and most likely to encounter barriers with the application system process within the five-county region.

FCS Staff conducted outreach to renter households least likely to apply for the Program, directing applicants to 211 to get started. These outreach activities included creating an awareness campaign to market the program, providing multiple communication options for applications like text, telephone, email, mail, and in-person, as well as communicating and coordinating with other program partners. Our staff also provided support for renter households in preparing, completing, and submitting the application.

## 2021 CARDBOARD BRIGADE

On November 16, 2021, the Family and Community Services Department and volunteers from other departments, partnering agencies, community members, and agency clients held a Cardboard Brigade in Alexandria, MN to raise awareness of hunger and homelessness, part of National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness week.

Local statistics were written on cardboard and held up along a busy Broadway Street between the hours of 3:30-5:00pm.

2021 Statistics included: 115 hotel vouchers issues between July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021; 14 households placed in Launch Pad since June 2020; 29.9% of students in Douglas County receive free/reduced lunches.

Donations were collected as part of a homeless drive due to the increased need seen in the community following the pandemic. Items included winter hats and gloves, personal hygiene items, hand warmers, non-perishable food items, gas cards, grocery cards, and monetary donations.





## GROUP CARES SUMMER PROJECT

During the week of July 12-16, young volunteers from across the country served the Douglas County area. They completed 16 different community projects and home repairs as part of the Group Missions Workcamp, a non-profit mission ministry serving communities across the U.S., in association with West Central Minnesota Communities Action.

Jessica Thompson of Alexandria, who had work done on her house, says she feels extremely thankful and blessed for the experience. Thompson originally received a letter from WCMCA about their weatherization program with a form to fill out if she felt interested in receiving assistance.

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**“After filling out the form, the process was super easy,” said Thompson, “WCMCA pretty much took care of everything.”**

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The volunteers come from youth groups and churches across the country and literally paid their way to serve residents in Douglas County.

“These kids fundraise their own money to serve communities across the U.S.,” said Gene Wyttenback, Weatherization Coordinator at WCMCA.

The workcamp served 16 homes, mostly in Douglas County and the surrounding area, which consisted of mostly exterior work, from building porches and decks, to providing wheelchair ramps, doorsteps and painting.

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**“We honestly couldn’t do it without WCMCA and the local sponsors,” said Susan Burton, director at Group Mission Trips, from Loveland, Colorado. “They are the real heroes.”**

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## LAUNCH PAD

### TEMPORARY SHELTER HOUSING

**A shelter program that temporarily houses one household at a time in each side of a modest two bedroom/two-unit twin home at no cost.**



The households utilize the time in Launch Pad to accomplish goals created by the client with the assistance of their case manager, during intensive case management required of the program.

Goals may include but are not limited to:

- Securing or increasing employment/income
- Securing daycare
- Applying for benefits such as SNAP, Medical Assistance, MFIP, and daycare assistance
- Resintating a driver's license
- Paying off fines
- Searching for safe, stable, and affordable housing, in whatever capacity that may be.

There is no set amount of time households are able to stay, as long as they are working toward completing their goal plan.

Launch Pad began providing shelter for clients in June 2020. Since then, 21 households have been served, including five unaccompanied youth households.

Of the 19 who have exited, two exited to an unsubsidized rental, one exited to college, three to subsidized housing, and 13 to a subsidized program through WCMCA. Two households are currently enrolled in the program, as of March 2022.

This duplex is rented from Alexandria HRA at a market rate. Launch Pad is fully furnished, and WCMCA pays the rent and utilities, and provides all cleaning supplies and personal hygiene items.

# 21

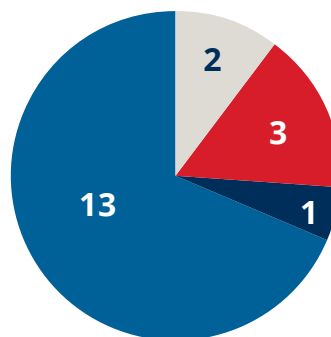
**HOUSEHOLDS  
SERVED**

*Since June 2020*

# 2

**CURRENTLY  
SERVED**

*As of April 2022*



#### HOUSEHOLD EXITS

- 1 – College
- 3 – Subsidized Housing
- 2 – Unsubsidized Rental
- 13 – Subsidized Program through WCMCA





## ENERGY ASSISTANCE & WEATHERIZATION

Helping eligible households maintain affordable, continuous and safe home energy through bill payment assistance, home energy crisis intervention and more.

**4,444**

HOUSEHOLDS UTILIZING  
ENERGY ASSISTANCE

**\$2,696,931**

*Primary Heat Funding Total*

**2,012**

HOUSEHOLDS IN  
CRISIS SERVED TOTALING

**\$1,335,292**

**192**

FURNACE REPAIRS  
TOTALING:

**\$287,196**

### ENERGY ASSISTANCE SUCCESS STORY

**After living in our home for many years, our historically reliable furnace went out.**

**January in Minnesota is not the time you want to wake up to your home being cold.**

I was nervous about purchasing a new furnace and the financial impact it would have on my family.

I called WCMCA and was connected with the energy program. Your staff immediately went to work on getting me the information I needed to start the application process. WCMCA acted quickly along side the HVAC contractors, and within a few days, I had a new furnace installed. I went to bed that night peacefully! The relief we felt was immeasurable, the gratitude overflows my eyes and down my face when I think of the impact you had on our family. A simple thank you does not seem adequate, but it is still the message I want you all to receive. THANK YOU for all of the work you have done and continue to do in our communities. It is important, it is impactful, and it is very much appreciated.



## CHILDREN & EDUCATION



**109**

### HOME-BASED EARLY HEAD START

Pregnant women & children  
(Prenatal to 3-years old)

**298**

### CENTER-BASED HEAD START PRESCHOOL

(Children Ages 3-5)

Promotes the school readiness of young children from low-income families through agencies in their local community. Head Start and Early Head Start programs support the comprehensive development of children from birth to age 5 in centers and in their own homes. Head Start services include early learning, health and family well-being.

#### PROGRAM SUCCESSES

**89%**

Of 4-year-old Head Start children met or exceeded expectations for Kindergarten readiness.

**Due to COVID-19, WCMCA Head Start preschool classrooms transitioned between learning models, which included distance learning, hybrid and in-person.**

To meet Head Start Performance Standards, and optimal school readiness, Head Start ensured 99% of enrolled children participated in timely, well-child exams and health screenings (developmental, mental health, hearing/vision) with community providers and 93% established dental care exams.



## WINTER GEAR DONATION TO ALL HEAD START FAMILIES

Initiated by a generous donation from the Lions Clubs of Grant County, WCMCA Head Start offered winter wear to all Early Head Start and Head Start families in our seven county service area.

**"The Head Start coat project helped my children get brand new stylish winter apparel. I am a single mother going to school full time with limited income. Nice winter gear can get expensive especially for growing kids."**

– A Grant County parent recipient

**I was able to get brand new coats and snow pants for my older children (past Head Start participants) as well as a snowsuit, mittens, and hats for my rapidly growing one-year-old. New winter apparel helped us get outside to enjoy winter activities, including my child's first-time sledding!**

– A Grant County parent recipient



Serving children and their families in the counties of Douglas, Morrison, Pope, Stearns and Todd along with 28 surrounding counties, and the states of North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

**348**

PARENTS SERVED

**694**

CHILDREN SERVED

**401**

SAFE EXCHANGES

**789**

PARENTING TIME  
VISITS



## HEALTH & FINANCES



**124**

PEOPLE ASSISTED BY  
MNSURE NAVIGATORS

### FREE TAX PREPARATION

**856**

FEDERAL TAX  
RETURNS

**1,392**

STATE TAX  
RETURNS

**663**

PROPERTY TAX  
REFUNDS

TOTALING:

**\$842,150**

BACK TO THE COMMUNITY  
TO SUPPORT MN RURAL  
ECONOMY



**THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS**

**511**

VOLUNTEERS

**19,517**

HOURS

**\$557,015**

TOTAL VALUE

Sign-up to volunteer, donate, and join our email list: [\*\*WCMCA.ORG/TAKE-ACTION\*\*](https://wcmca.org/take-action)





**10**  
VOLUNTEER  
DRIVERS

**42**  
RIDERS

**12,395**  
MILES DRIVEN  
Both loaded & unloaded



**32**  
CLIENTS  
SERVED

## THANK YOU FOR GIVING!

To make an online donation  
to WCMCA, please visit:

**wcmca.org**

To give via mail, our address is:

**West Central MN Communities Action**  
411 Industrial Park Blvd.,  
Elbow Lake, MN 56531



@WCMCAinc



@wcmca.inc



WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA  
***Communities Action***

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