



2020: THE YEAR IN REVIEW
ANNUAL REPORT



WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA
Communities Action

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

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

Valarie Arnquist
Head Start Director

Heather Carlson
Fiscal Services Director

Mandy Braaten
Energy Assistance and
Weatherization Director

Heather Molesworth
Family and Community
Services Director

Kelli Minnerath
Director of Development
and Operations

Joe Niehaus
Housing Director

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Donny Wohlers — Chair
Stevens County, Co Commissioner

Tammy Boushek — Vice Chair
Douglas County, Private Sector

Dave Salberg — Treasurer
Traverse County, Co Commissioner

Al Glaeseman — Secretary
Douglas County, Low-Income Rep

Teresa Gustafson — Past Chair
Traverse County, Low-Income Rep

BOARD MEMBERS

Marlene Cihlar
Pope County—Low-Income Rep

Keith Englund
Douglas County—Co Commissioner

Hannah Michaelson
Stevens County, Low-Income Rep

Robin McNamar
Grant County—Low-Income Rep

Janel Mendoza
Pope County—Private Sector

Michelle Rinke
Traverse County—Private Sector

Cody Rogahn
Pope County, Co Commissioner

Ken Johnson
Grant County, Co Commissioner

Bob Staples
Stevens County, Private Sector

Stella Troszczyński
Grant County, Private Sector

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.



A LETTER FROM THE CEO



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 this year's Annual Report, we will highlight many of our wonderful programs, as well as share about the work that WCMCA, Inc. completed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that rocked our world, beginning in March 2020.

To say the year 2020 was a challenge would be an understatement. When COVID-19 hit our communities mid-March, our agency was not fully prepared to move to a virtual workplace, but all departments moved very rapidly to meet that need. Offices were temporarily closed to the public with only a few administrative staff remaining in office.

As a Leadership Team, we held weekly virtual meetings with our top concern concentrated on the continuation of client services in the most effective way, with as few barriers as possible amidst a pandemic. WCMCA, Inc. did not close, we simply pivoted to a new system of delivery. I am so incredibly proud of the Board of Directors and staff at WCMCA, Inc. Each problem to conquer was addressed with problem solving solutions and all with clients' best interest in mind. WCMCA, Inc. staff stepped up and answered the call to keep serving families and communities in need.

WCMCA, Inc. continued to provide services as additional funding came in to help those most in need. We received additional funding from Federal, State, Foundations, and private funders. I received calls from community members choosing to donate their Federal Stimulus money to our agency to help those in need within their communities - those calls touched my heart. Staff continued to answer the calls, and in this Annual Report, you will see what we were able to accomplish for the children and families served by our programming.

West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc. held strong to the spirit and hope that drives our network to improve communities and make America a better place to live! I give thanks to our Board of Directors, staff members and funders in supporting us and working beside us to help people help themselves and each other.

We look forward to the end of this pandemic and the ability to continue to walk along with community members, as they work towards self-sufficiency. We are 55 years Community Action Strong!

Missy Becker-Cook
Chief Executive Officer

COVID-19 RESPONSE



Like the rest of the world, when we sent staff home in March 2020, we had no idea what was ahead.

What we thought would be a two-week work-from-home assignment, turned in to six months or more for most our staff. It took us a little time to adjust to the new way of doing things; making sure staff were equipped with what they needed to continue to offer the best service possible, while keeping them safe was our biggest concern.

We all learned Zoom and Teams meetings, and children and families had “virtual” visits and Head Start classes. Our staff remained available for clients, but we closed our offices to in-person meetings and walk-ins. All business was via phone or internet. We tried very hard to separate directors from their coordinators, so that if they were to get sick, it would not take down an entire department. We were learning, as was the entire world, as new information came out daily. Our Board of Directors also moved to virtual meetings, but continued to provide exceptional support and encouragement to staff.

Throughout the pandemic, we’ve remained intentional about listening to the people who need our services, making sure they feel that we are accessible to them, and responding to their needs in a timely manner. We know that many of our clients were struggling even before the pandemic hit, so being there for them as things took a turn for the worse was of utmost importance.

While we cannot wait to get back to “normal” day-to-day life, we are grateful for the lessons that the pandemic has taught us. Communication within departments has never been better. Transitioning to a hybrid model of work-from-home and in-office has forced flexibility that was not there before, and has given the management team great confidence and trust in the staff that work for WCMCA. We are so proud of where we are today and truly feel that we make a difference in the lives of those we serve and are grateful for the opportunity to step up to the plate and continue to serve during this (what we hope is) a once in a lifetime pandemic.

We mourn with those who have lost loved ones to Coronavirus and will continue to take this seriously and follow all guidelines given to us by the state and federal government.

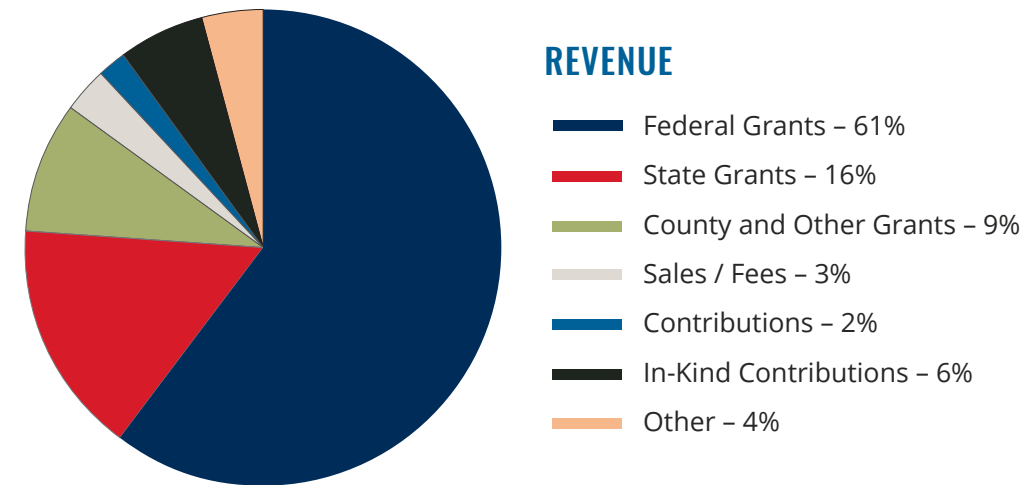
COVID Response Key Services and Program Changes:

- “CHAPS” funding allowed awarding over \$600,000 in rent, mortgage, and utility assistance to the 5-county area.
- Funding from the CARES Act enabled flexible funding for clients to apply for assistance with water bills, groceries, vehicle repairs, and other things that regular programming may not have covered.
- Personal Protective Equipment was purchased and provided to all staff in every office and Head Start Center to keep everyone as safe as possible.
- The Energy Assistance Program received COVID funds, in addition to yearly funding, to assist specific clients with heating and water needs and extended their program year.
- Weatherization Program staff participated in many hours of training in order to safely enter people’s homes to complete services once the stay-at-home order was lifted.
- The Head Start Program remained in consistent contact with all families – either through virtual, phone, or outdoor socially distanced visits while classrooms were shut down. COVID funding allowed them to take extra precautions to keep all of the kids and classroom staff safe and follow all guidelines.

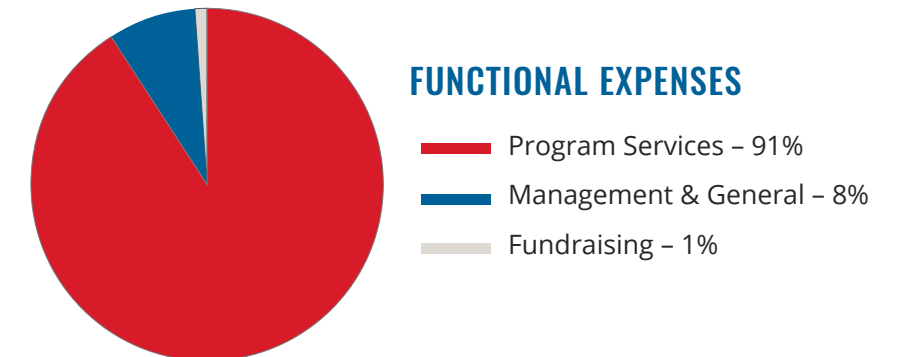
FINANCIALS

A YEAR IN REVIEW

REVENUE

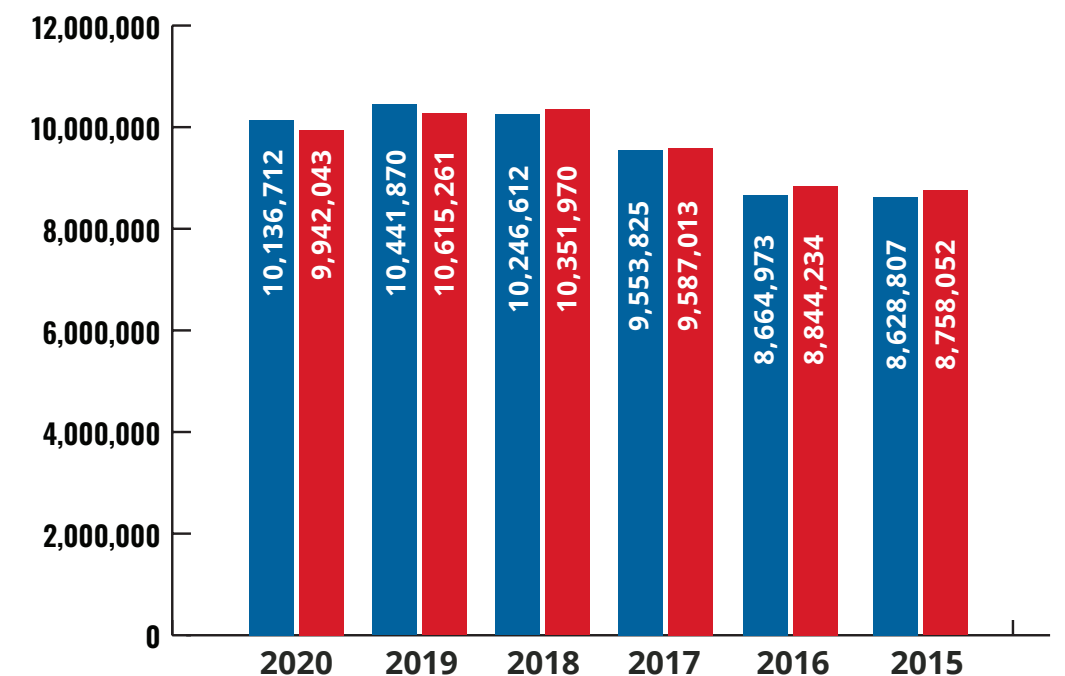


FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES



REVENUE VS. EXPENSES

Revenue (Blue bars)
Expenses (Red bars)



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

211

HOUSEHOLDS ASSISTED WITH RENT

Both short- and long-term programs

22

HOUSEHOLDS USED PRE-PURCHASE HOMEBUYER COUNSELING

6

 NEW HOMES BUILT BY THE ICW CREW

10

 FORECLOSURE PREVENTION ASSISTANCE

COVID-19 HOUSING

\$637,681

Paid to help prevent eviction, prevent homelessness, and maintain housing stability for eligible renters and homeowners during COVID-19.

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 a preference for those at or below 200% of federal poverty guidelines, and be 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

RENT: \$461,390	MORTGAGES: \$26,110	UTILITIES: \$122,504
CONTRACT FOR DEED: \$19,180	LOT RENTS: \$4,947	
ASSOCIATION FEES: \$3,321	HOMEOWNER'S INSURANCE: \$228	

NEW PROGRAM AT WCMCA WCMCA HOME CARE AND REPAIR



The needs assessment completed in 2020 showed a very high need for supportive services for older adults in the community, specifically for programs that could help with small chores around their homes.

Using this information, WCMCA applied for and received a Live Well at Home grant through the MN Department of Human Services. We were awarded a two-year grant to help establish a chore service program for the five-county area.

The WCMCA Home Care & Repair program offers homemaking and chore services through a full-time Maintenance Provider and volunteer staff. This program serves the counties of Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens and Traverse.

The goal is to provide these services so older adults can continue to live in their home as long as it is safe for them to do so. This program is intended for adults age 65 and older.

This program has a lead chore service provider on staff who will do many of the projects, and who will also lead a team of volunteers to provide the services.

EXAMPLE PROJECTS

Basic Repairs

Window, door, flooring repairs
Small plumbing leaks, slow drains
Light switch/outlet replacement

Period Maintenance

Change furnace & air conditioning (A/C) filters
Appliances: clean & inspect

Interior/Exterior Maintenance

Clean gutters
Minor siding, trim & gutter repair
Stair and handrail repair
Sidewalk & driveway crack repair
Basic kitchen cleaning
Sweeping / Vacuuming / Dusting
Cleaning floors & trash removal
Bed making & laundry

HOUSING SUCCESS STORY

After her brother moved out, Sarah could no longer afford her home on her own.

She lived in her car for a few days, until she reached out to WCMCA looking for help.

She needed a first month's rent/deposit following a referral from her place of employment. Fortunately, Launch Pad was just completed and we were able to place her on the program the same day she inquired. She was working full-time, but did not make enough to pay market-rate rent. WCMCA identified an available income-based unit in Glenwood. With the help of her case manager, Sarah applied for the unit and a few weeks later, was thrilled to receive approval to move in. She said it felt like a weight was lifted off her shoulders.

Sarah now sits on our Consumer Advisory and FHPAP Advisory Board. One of her main goals, after being safe and stably housed, was to be able to give back to WCMCA by providing ideas to others who are going through the same situation she was and to give them hope.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE & WEATHERIZATION

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

4,801

HOUSEHOLDS UTILIZING ENERGY ASSISTANCE

Primary Heat Funding Totaling:

\$1,148,072

170

HOUSEHOLDS SERVED

By the Weatherization and the Conservation Improvement Program

\$315,699

213

FURNACE REPAIRS TOTALING:

\$365,956

13 LEAD RISK ASSESSMENTS

5 HOME REHABILITATIONS



Photo by Douglas County Historical Society

ALEXANDRIA DOWNTOWN FIRE RESPONSE

In February 2020, several businesses in downtown Alexandria experienced a devastating fire. The businesses ranged from restaurants to clothing stores, and most of them had upper-level apartments. In total, four buildings and five businesses were destroyed, and 23 people were displaced. Thankfully, no one was injured.

The people of Alexandria immediately began to ask how they could help and how to donate. The Alexandria Area Community Foundation began to collect donations and reached out to WCMCA to partner in distributing the funds to the fire victims. We were honored to have been asked and proud to be thought of as an organization that could be trusted to be good stewards of the donations.

We got to work immediately. The Red Cross placed everyone in hotel rooms, so we connected with the hotel to extend stays and buy time to find new places to live. Alexandria has a very tight and expensive rental market, so we knew it would be a challenge. In less than a month, all households had moved into stable housing with the help of our staff and financial assistance from the community.

In total, \$48,734.14 was used for first month's rent and deposit, groceries, furniture, and other miscellaneous items to help get families back on their feet. Funds were also available to assist businesses with relocating, if needed, or to replace lost wages.

Thank you to:

- Alexandria Area Transitional Housing Alliance
- Days Inn Alexandria
- Central Specialties Inc.
- St. Mary's Catholic Church
- West Central Initiative
- Alexandria Area Community Foundation
- DHS-OEO
- Area landlords
- All who donated food/to the relief fund
- Douglas County and City of Alexandria Staff
- Alexandria Fire Department
- Douglas County Sheriff's Office
- Ferguson Brothers Excavating Inc
- First Responders and area Fire Departments
- The amazing WCMCA housing staff



CHILDREN & EDUCATION



958

PEOPLE SERVED

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.

137

HOME-BASED EARLY HEAD START

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

327

CENTER-BASED HEAD START PRESCHOOL

(Children Ages 3-5)

PROGRAM SUCCESSES

93%

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

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.

HEALTH & FINANCES



130
PEOPLE ASSISTED BY
MNSURE NAVIGATORS

704
FREE TAX PREPARATION
PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS,
REFUNDS TOTALING:
\$1,033,414



6 MATCHED PAYOUTS
TOTALING: **\$24,523**

A matched savings project that helps Minnesota resident low-wage earners build assets. Participant savings may be matched by the program at a rate of 3:1

- 4 Home Ownership
- 1 Small Business Development
- 1 Education

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS



507
VOLUNTEERS

17,378
HOURS

\$364,875
TOTAL VALUE

STAY CONNECTED



@WCMCAinc



@wcmca.inc

Sign-up to volunteer, donate, find links to our social media, and join our email list to be the first to hear about upcoming events and news related to WCMCA.

[WCMCA.ORG/TAKE-ACTION](https://wcmca.org/take-action)

THANK YOU FOR GIVING!

To make an online donation to WCMCA, please visit:

wcmca.org

To give via mail, our address is:

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Elbow Lake, MN 56531



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Communities Action

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