



FIGHTING POVERTY MATTERS



Community Action Agency of Butte County, Inc.
Helping People. Changing Lives.



BEING THE CHANGE

Community action agencies have tangible impact on local lives



When the U.S. government declared a war on poverty 50 years ago, one of the unique and effective results was the creation of community action agencies. Their aim is to combat poverty on several levels, with housing and food ranking highest among them.

“The goal is to create opportunities to help people’s lives improve,” says Thomas Tenorio, chief executive officer of the Community Action Agency (CAA) of Butte County. “We’re all about helping people create change.”

In Butte County, that change is happening through programs like the Esplanade House, which provides transitional housing and support for homeless families, and the North State Food Bank. The agency also offers meals for seniors and help for low-income residents to weatherize their homes, thereby saving in utility costs.

“We hope to improve conditions for low-income residents as well as the broader community,” Tenorio says. “There’s a ripple effect, so when we help some people, we’re also helping their neighbors — for example, we help a family and then we see improvements in schools and in hospitals.”

In the same vein, creating programs like the Esplanade House in North Chico makes the whole community better by helping locals in need. But when the complex was built 10 years ago, it faced a huge amount of resistance. Tenorio took the opportunity to educate neighbors that “the homeless are just as deserving of respect as everyone else.”

“When we moved into this area, we turned a vacant lot into something that now changes people’s lives,” he says.

Tenorio has led Butte County’s CAA for 20 years, but he’s been involved in community action for more than three decades. In that time, he’s seen attitudes change and he’s seen the homeless and low-income populations change as well.

“There are still a lot of folks in need,” Tenorio says. “With our changing economy, I can only see that need increasing.”

Tenorio looks to the Esplanade House, which offers 58 one- to three-bedroom apartments for homeless families with children. He looks to the North State Food Bank, which feeds more than 45,000 people each month. And he looks to the Senior Nutrition Program, which provides a daily meal to 135 seniors who are homebound due to illness or disability. These are all tangible results of the programs CAA of Butte County has in place. They are administered by staff members, but rely largely on volunteers and donations to keep running.

One thing that attracted Tenorio to community action agencies 37 years ago was their focus on the local community. They are local to their core — they are community members working together to help their neighbors improve their lives.

“We work with a real community of providers, from local government to private businesses,” Tenorio says. “We’re not doing it alone.”

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.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY ACTION

Dear friend:

Fifty years is a milestone in anyone’s book. But it need not be a sign of age. The Community Action Agency of Butte County, Inc. observes the 50th anniversary of the War on Poverty acknowledging results. Over 10,000 seniors have maintained their independence, over 500 families have returned to living from homelessness, 35,000 families have improved living conditions through weatherization and over 30,000 families have improved their health from hunger insecurity. Like the other 1,000 CAAs across the country formed as a small part of this war, we have sought to improve the lives of local residents. This is done by local boards making local service plans in response to local needs. Our collective efforts bear the marks of a futuristic effort growing in effectiveness and not one in decline. We use tools seeking continual improvement including results-based planning, organizational standards of excellence and certified professionals. Join us!

Towards Excellence,

Thomas P. Tenorio,
*Chief Executive Officer,
CAA of Butte County*



Fred and Rita Riecker have volunteered for the North State Food Bank for more than 20 years.

Photo by Melanie MacTavish

FEEDING THE HUNGRY

One Butte County couple dedicate their lives to those in need

To say Fred and Rita Riecker care about their neighbors would be an understatement. For the past 20-plus years, the couple have dedicated time, money and sweat to feeding the hungry among us. They do so by running a food distribution site in Magalia, along with volunteering to help out at “tailgate” events throughout communities in the six-county region served by the North State Food Bank.

“Fred and Rita are some of the most passionate people I’ve ever met,” says Adam Kingsley, food bank supervisor.

Each month, the couple deliver food from the food bank to a Magalia church for distribution. It sounds simple, but because of the large number of hungry people who receive food there, it takes several trips and about two weeks of preparation.

“We used to have 50-60 families standing in line,” Fred says. “That turned into 80-90, then 100, 120, 140. These last few months we’ve had 168.”

Fred recently bought a larger truck to cut down on trips to and from Chico. He’s also set up several awnings outside their Magalia home under which he can store the food. And they have three freezers for perishables.

But for the Rieckers, it’s not a burden. In fact, it’s a family affair. Most months, three generations of their family come by

the church to help pack, sort and distribute boxes of food. For those recipients who can’t make it to the church, either because of bad weather or lack of transportation, Fred and Rita deliver directly to their homes.

“One woman we’ve been delivering to for about five years has adopted me as her son,” Fred says with a laugh.

“And she refers to me as her daughter-in-law,” Rita adds.

The Rieckers know from experience what it’s like to receive help from others. Years ago, after Fred was laid off from his job at PG&E, they relied on food assistance to get by.

“We were so thankful for the help,” Rita says.

“We tell people, ‘We were standing in the same line at one time.’”

In addition to the monthly distribution at the Magalia church, the Rieckers lend their organizational skills to tailgate events — pop-up distribution sites in areas the North State Food Bank has determined have a need for food. Those events span 12,000 square miles and include the counties of Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Plumas, Sierra and Tehama.

The Rieckers continue to volunteer their time and money to a cause they’ve stood behind for more than two decades because they see firsthand the results of their efforts.

“When we see the smiles on people’s faces, it makes it all worthwhile,” Rita says.

FOOD BANK STEPS UP

Every month, the North State Food Bank serves an average of **45,000 hungry residents in its six-county region**. But even with 53 monthly distribution sites like the one in Magalia, local partners such as soup kitchens, and tailgate events, many people are still hungry, says Food Bank Supervisor Adam Kingsley.

“There are over **65,000 food-insecure individuals** in this region,” Kingsley says.

The North State Food Bank works with the national Feeding America network, the State Emergency Food Assistance Program and private donors to supply the food. Operated by the **Community Action Agency of Butte County**, its net is cast wider to include the counties of Colusa, Glenn, Plumas, Sierra and Tehama. Last year alone,

the food bank handed out **2.3 million pounds of food**, Kingsley says.

One way the food bank aims to stop the cycle of hunger is through outreach that connects people to **CalFresh** benefits, previously known as food stamps. More CalFresh recipients means more people would have a sustainable resource to help them put food on the table.

In 2013, Butte County lost out on \$24.1 million in CalFresh benefits because eligible people were not signed up.



SINGLE DAD FINDS HIS WAY

Esplanade House offers structure and support to families in need

Benjamin Bostrom has found a stable, supportive community at the Esplanade House.
Photo by Melanie MacTavish

For Benjamin Bostrom, the Esplanade House has been a lifesaver. A little more than a year ago, when he decided to clean up his act, he was living in a sober men's home and only had partial custody of his two young sons. Now he's a full-time single dad, a graduate of drug court and employed as an on-call firefighter for the U.S. Forest Service.

"I just got mixed up in the wrong stuff," Benjamin says. He describes a lifestyle of hard partying, not being able to hold onto a job because of his drinking and drug use, and multiple arrests. Just a few years ago, he and the mother of his sons were living at the Esplanade House, a transitional housing program for homeless families in Chico. But Benjamin had a hard time staying sober, and he was asked to leave. Then he got his wake-up call. He wanted to be there for his kids, especially since they were taken into the care of Butte County's Department of Children's Services. So, he stopped drinking and doing drugs, started going to Narcotics Anonymous meetings and began working toward getting custody of his boys, now 2 and 3. An Esplanade House employee noticed how well Benjamin was doing and encouraged him to reapply for an apartment. He moved back in six months ago with his sons.

"One of the cool things about living here is I know all the other families," Benjamin says. "We do

things together, everyone looks out for each other and because we come from similar backgrounds we have empathy for each other."

Because all the residents are parents, there are lots of social opportunities for the children, as well as the adults.

Living here also has helped him with drug court and Children's Services, Benjamin says, because of Esplanade House's reputation for having the resources needed to succeed in those programs.

"With Children's Services, they know you have structure, and that you have all the classes here," Benjamin says. The Esplanade House offers classes on parenting, financial literacy, codependency and many other

topics. Residents also get help in the way of counseling, as well as clothing, food and furniture, which come via donations.

Residents are responsible for taking care of the 58-unit apartment complex. To that end, Benjamin serves as the rules and safety coordinator for the Esplanade House Community Council. He's coaching the "E House" softball team. He and his neighbors are also required to stay sober and to contribute money out of each paycheck to a trust fund they take with them when they graduate from Esplanade House.

"I really appreciate the second chance this place has given me," Benjamin says.

"I really appreciate the second chance this place has given me."

Benjamin Bostrom
Esplanade House resident

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

When it comes to transitional housing for homeless families, Sherry Morgado can't think of another program in Northern California like the Esplanade House. In addition to offering a place to live, the Esplanade House offers a full array of services to help residents get back on their feet and end the cycle of homelessness.

The typical family is able to move into

the Esplanade House and then out on its own successfully in about 18 months. Services include everything from parenting and budgeting classes to trust funds for each household that residents are required to contribute to each month.

"Ultimately, when they graduate, they'll have something to use as a security deposit or [for] a home," says Morgado, chief operations officer at the Community

Action Agency of Butte County.

Each household has a case manager who monitors their progress. From health care services to drug and alcohol counseling, it's all an effort to give residents the tools they need to succeed on their own.

"They graduate with a foundation underneath them again," Morgado says.

In the last four years,
629 INDIVIDUALS
(257 adults, 373 children)
have been served by the
Esplanade House, with 80 percent
moving on to independent living
with a stable income.

Harold and Joyce Greer receive lunches through the Senior Nutrition Program, which makes life a little easier for the couple. Joyce is the primary caregiver for her husband.

Photo by Melanie MacTavish



AN EXTRA HELPING

Meal deliveries allow couple to live independently

Joyce and Harold Greer moved west from Wyoming to be closer to their daughter and four grandchildren, but the cost of living in the East Bay was too steep. They decided to make their way up north to Chico, where they've been for the past eight years.

Both knew they wanted to live on their own, and they purchased a modest home in a park for seniors. Things changed in 2010 after Harold, a retired minister, had open-heart surgery. He also has diabetes. Over the years it's become more difficult for Joyce to take on all of the cooking, not to mention making well-balanced meals.

Just over a year ago the Greers contacted Community Action Agency of Butte County's Senior Nutrition Program, which provides lunch for qualifying homebound seniors 60 years of age and older. There is a donation request of \$2.50 per meal, but qualifying seniors will not be turned away due to their inability to donate, and many donate what they can.

"It's very helpful to me because I'm a caregiver," Joyce says. "On the days I'm not feeling well it really is a blessing."

That's only one part of it. The program allows folks like Harold and Joyce (who both turn 82 this year) to remain in their homes, rather than in assisted living. This gives them

autonomy while also costing far less money than a hospital stay or a retirement home. Perhaps even more importantly, these visits are meaningful to seniors, many of whom do not have visitors often. Harold and Joyce have come to appreciate Mondays, when deliveries come to their door.

"The lady who delivers, Leanne, is such a sweet person," Joyce says. "We really love her. She's kind of perky, so she always makes you feel better."

The Senior Nutrition Program also offers variety, with a main dish (meat or fish), two vegetables, whole wheat bread or roll and fruit. Joyce says she enjoys the fajitas. The meals are approved by a Registered Dietician and are prepared in a way that makes them easy for seniors to eat.

Joyce still enjoys to cook. She says she sometimes bakes a chicken, and saves the bones to make

soup. The program provides just enough help to make life a little less stressful. Joyce still makes it out to church for Saturday service, and makes the occasional train ride down to see her daughter. The most important thing, she says, is being able to remain at home and maintain their independence.

"It's better than the alternative," she says with a chuckle. "I really appreciate it. The meals really are a boon for us."

"It's very helpful to me because I'm a caregiver. On the days I'm not feeling well it really is a blessing."

Joyce Greer
Senior meal recipient

HELPING SENIORS AGE IN PLACE

CAA Butte's Senior Nutrition Program provides so much more than a meal. Having healthy meals delivered allows seniors to stay in their homes, at a fraction of the cost of an assisted living facility. Inadequate nutrition is also connected to half of all diseases that affect seniors, so well-balanced meals keep seniors from more costly medical care. Lisa Roehling, Senior Nutrition Program supervisor, says they deliver meals to 135 seniors per week, most of whom are 80 and older. And 55 percent live alone, 65 percent live in poverty and 85 percent are nutritionally high-risk. The Senior Nutrition Program is not only positive for keeping seniors happy, it's necessary in keeping them healthy as well.

\$3,022

Cost of a private, one-bedroom residence in an assisted living facility FOR ONE MONTH*

VS.

\$50

Cost to feed a senior at home FOR ONE MONTH

* (Data from ALFA, ASHA, AAHSA, NCAL & NIC 2009 Overview of Assisted Living)



Matthew Ormsby, 53, is disabled and unable to do projects around the home to save on energy costs. CAA of Butte County provided him with upgraded light bulbs, an energy-efficient refrigerator and new windows.

Photo by Melanie MacTavish

KEEPING IT COOL

Resident receives energy-saving upgrades to his home

SAVING ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY

It's no secret that weather-stripping windows and using newer, energy-saving appliances will save you money in your own household, but it goes beyond that.

Saving energy means less demand for new energy sources, which can be costly for communities.

"It's been 10 or 15 years since a new energy plant has been built, so that tells you something right there," says Aaron Jones, who's the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program coordinator for the Community Action Agency

of Butte County.

Weatherizing and retrofitting homes also puts people to work in the "green economy." Jones says CAA Butte employs 38 contractors in their network.

Since the Weatherization Assistance Program began in 1976, more than 7 million homes across the country have received energy-efficient improvements, including new insulation, weather-stripping of doors and windows, as well as upgrades in heating and cooling units.

According to the U.S. Energy Department, homes that are weatherized save

25%-30%
on their monthly bill.

Matthew Ormsby is one of many residents benefiting from having his home weatherized by the Community Action Agency (CAA) of Butte County. And you'll never meet a nicer, more appreciative guy.

"They're coming with a new refrigerator, which blows me away," Matthew says. "I'm not sure what I've done to deserve such kindness."

The 53-year-old former iron worker has been disabled for the better part of 20 years after he fell three stories while working on a high-rise. He lives with chronic pain and getting around is difficult. But Matthew still made it a point to go down and personally thank CAA of Butte County's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) staff for helping him make important energy-saving changes.

He recalls the day of their first visit.

"They came to my door and looked at what I needed, and within two hours had changed all my light bulbs and a ceiling fan," he says.

That was only the beginning. The windows in Matthew's home didn't even shut properly, which in addition to letting in cold air, didn't allow the heater to run efficiently. Staff will soon install new double-paned windows and a new door.

The Energy Savings Assistance program is sponsored by PG&E and includes services such as weather-stripping and installing

new attic insulation. The services are coordinated with CAA's LIHEAP, a block grant that provides services to eligible low-income households.

Matthew says that through the kindness of his landlord he was able to purchase his manufactured home in Oroville a few years ago at a low price. The recent energy-saving improvements made by CAA of Butte County have had a big impact on Matthew, who lives on about \$800 a month.

"It's people like this that make my faith in humanity [possible]," he says.

"It's people like this that make my faith in humanity [possible]."

Matthew Ormsby
weatherization recipient

He recently had a new energy-efficient refrigerator delivered to his home. Of home appliances, refrigerators are notoriously the biggest energy users — especially older models, which run harder and for shorter periods of time, and consume 30 to 40 percent more energy than new ones. In addition to making structural changes to homes, CAA of Butte County

also offers tips on how to save energy and money. Matthew said he learned a few things in addition to getting a refresher on basics like turning off lights when you're not in a room and setting the heater to 68 degrees or lower.

It's been an eye-opening experience for Matthew, who became more aware of his energy use and, more importantly, found out there's help for those in need. Needless to say, Matthew knows the entire LIHEAP staff by name.

"I can't forget them," he said. "They're one group of cool people."



WINNING THE WAR

Q&A with Thomas Tenorio

Thomas Tenorio has been working in community action for 37 years, the last 20 of which he's spent at Community Action Agency of Butte County. Tenorio believes community action is working in Butte County and says even more can be done with the help of residents.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of community action agencies and the war on poverty. Are we winning this war?

I think it's clear that yes, we are winning the war on poverty. The encouraging fact that I take away from my 37 years is that there's always going to be people who are poor, but they are not the same people. That tells me the strategies employed work, and that in the next generation, there's going to be some folks who need those self-sufficiency strategies or some other derivative of community action.

Why is community action an effective solution to poverty?

I would say primarily because it's a locally driven strategy. The whole structure of community action [governing] boards is unique because it brings together representatives from the public sector, private sector and low-income sector. Poverty affects quite a number of folks ... and the low-income individual plays a vital role in that whole formula for how we are going to solve poverty at the local level.

Does CAA Butte get enough funding?

If we think that the dollars allocated to community action programs at the national level are all that we're going to need to solve poverty, we are sadly mistaken.

But the small dollars community action programs have is leveraged. That's where we get our success from — for every community action dollar that comes in we're able to get other federal, state and private dollars to create an effective program.

What are some ways the community can support the work you do?

Definitely through volunteering. We've got approximately 75 employees, and yet we do the work of many, many more because of the availability and commitment of volunteers. We have volunteers who do everything from helping pack meal boxes for seniors to helping give out food to hungry families, to helping homeless kids be able to read and do their homework.

The other very tangible way is donating. While there is a lot to be said for volunteerism, it's also unrealistic for us to rely upon volunteers for all of what we do. There's definitely a need for additional financial support.

How do businesses support what you do?

We have businesses from landscapers to [large companies] like Sierra Nevada Brewery. Sierra Nevada provides us with material goods — for instance, cardboard boxes they no longer use, but are vital for us to put food in when we do our food distributions. So it's kind of a natural partnership there. We also have a local housing developer who helps us with maintenance activities we have at our housing sites.

CAA Butte has a program called Volunteers in Tax Assistance. Why is tax preparation so important?

It's a seasonal activity, but it is an important one because 1,000 people choose to file their required [income tax] return through us. We calculated last year, based upon an average return of \$1,100, that we were able to facilitate bringing in around \$1 million in cash refunds. [Through recirculation of those dollars and savings to individuals getting their taxes done for free] we can truthfully say we've put \$4 million into the Butte County economy.

What other services do you provide in the community that people might not know about?

We're always looking for a way to build or improve housing. If you have affordable housing, you have a better fighting chance to get rid of other woes related to poverty. We have two [low-income housing] projects under our belts and are working on a third project as we speak.

"The encouraging fact that I take away ... is that there's always going to be people who are poor, but they are not the same people."

Thomas Tenorio
chief executive officer, CAA of Butte County

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY ACTION MATTERS

Fifty years after the War on Poverty began, economic disparities are still alive in our communities, including Butte County. Community Action Agency of Butte County is serving the community through programs that address hunger, housing, energy use and seniors. CAA Butte's efforts are an efficient and cost-effective approach to the War on Poverty. Community action gives consumers the tools to lift themselves out of poverty, so they rely less on government aid.

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Weatherization
Utility Assistance
PG&E Assistance
Wood, Propane, Heating Oil

For information on Energy Assistance:

2640 S. Fifth Ave., Suite 1 & 2
Oroville, CA 95965
530-712-2600, opt. 1

ESPLANADE HOUSE

Transitional Housing for Homeless Families
Permanent Supportive Housing for Families

For information on Esplanade House:

181 E. Shasta Ave.
Chico, CA 95973
530-712-2600, opt. 4

FOOD AND NUTRITION

Senior Nutrition Program
Home-Delivered Meals
Emergency Food Assistance Program
Farm 2 Kids
North State Food Bank

For information on Food and Nutrition:

2640 S. Fifth Ave., Suite 8
Oroville, CA 95965
530-712-2600, opt. 3

WE'RE MOVING!
The North State
Food Bank will soon
move from its Chico
location to a new
warehouse in Oroville.

ASSET BUILDING

Financial Education
Volunteers in Tax Assistance

For information on Asset Building:

181 E. Shasta Ave.
Chico, CA 95973
530-712-2600, opt. 5 then 4

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Affordable Housing
Community/Commercial Facilities

HELP FULFILL THE PROMISE

Community Action Agency of Butte County needs your help to continue changing lives in our community. Call 530-712-2600 or visit www.buttecaa.com/donate and tell them how you want to help fulfill the promise of community action:

VOLUNTEER

- Homework help for kids
- Landscaping of facilities
- Home and auto maintenance
- Assemble food boxes
- Clerical support
- Mentor an Esplanade House family
- Perform CalFresh outreach
- Volunteer at a food distribution
- Internships for students

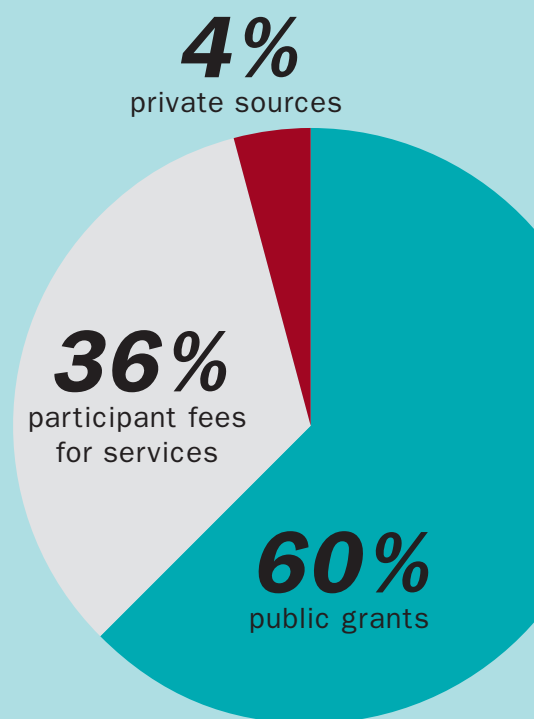
BUSINESS/GROUP PARTNERSHIPS

- Developers can partner on affordable housing projects
- Banks can sponsor financial literacy programs
- Workplace philanthropy through coordinated service days
- Employer-matched employee giving
- Host a food drive

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- Sponsor meals for a senior for one year (\$600)
- Sponsor children at Esplanade House to attend summer camps (\$200)
- Support Farm 2 Kids fresh produce distribution for low-income children (\$5/bag)
- Estate giving

CAA BUTTE FUNDING SOURCES



COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY OF BUTTE COUNTY, INC.
530-712-2600 • WWW.BUTTECAA.COM