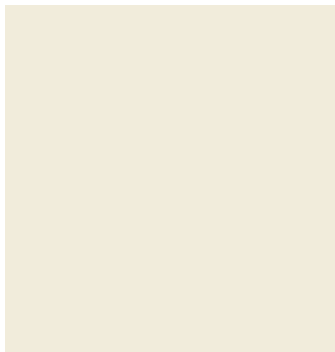
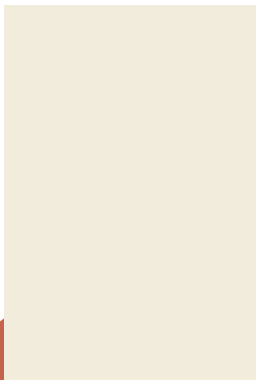
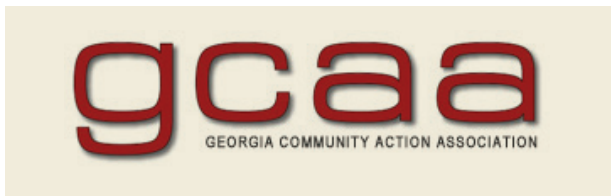
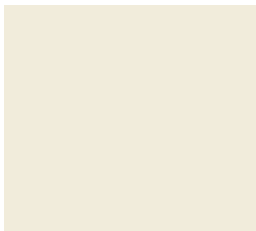




OPPORTUNITY NEWS & VIEWS

Helping People, Changing
Lives, Building Families

A Special Advertising Supplement

Fighting Poverty In Georgia

BY KENDALL FIELDS

Georgia Community Action Association improves quality of life for residents

Georgia has one of the highest poverty rates in the nation, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. There is no doubt poverty is real and many residents are struggling to survive.

For over 40 years, the Georgia Community Action Association (GCAA), a network of the state's 20 Community Action Agencies, has been working to find the root causes of poverty and eliminate them, to provide a better quality of life for community members.

"[Community action agencies] must continue to be that voice of consciousness and reason when it comes to how we treat our elderly, children, disadvantaged, low-income families and less fortunate."

LORRAINE DANIELS,
Executive Director
Georgia Community Action Association

"Our goal is to alleviate crises and to foster self-sufficiency," says GCAA President Jimmie Samuel. "We put a lot of effort into case management and helping people move from crisis to safety and to help them thrive. Although we provide a plethora of services to Georgia's low-income families, we are more than service organizations. We have a proven track record of helping people become self-sufficient."

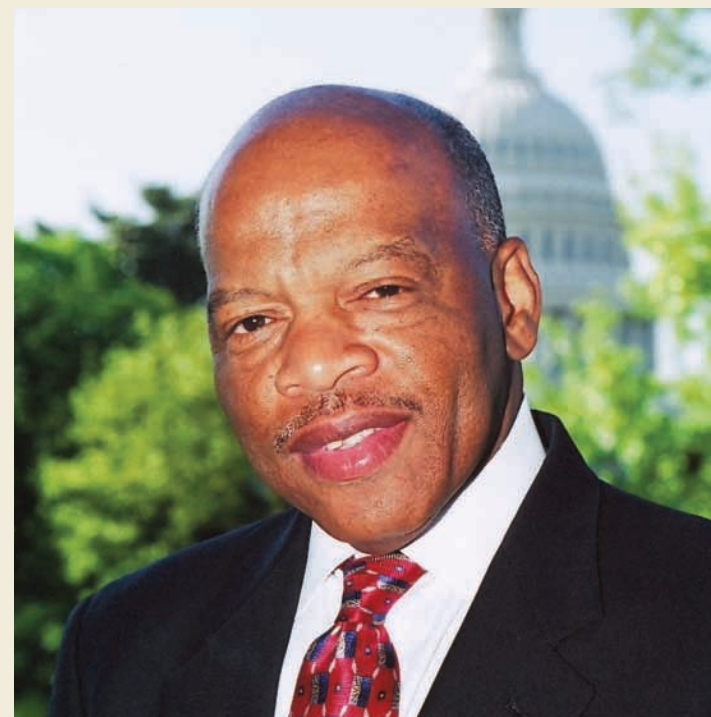
Among its many programs, the organization offers child and youth development programs, emergency and employment services, weatherization and energy services, and housing and shelter assistance to Georgia residents in need.

GCAA, which provides support and assists the efforts of its member agencies, was founded after President John F. Kennedy commissioned his economic advisers to find a solution to poverty in 1963. After Kennedy was assassinated, President

Lyndon Johnson continued this effort and developed The Great Society in 1964. This plan was designed to improve the lives of all Americans regardless of their background or circumstances. When the Economic Opportunity Act was signed later that year, the nationwide community action network was born with the goal of encouraging Americans to take care of their fellow countrymen.

In the early 1980s, community action organizations saw big cutbacks and lost over 50 percent of funding. In 1981, President Ronald Reagan introduced the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), which changed how federal funding is distributed and has become an integral part in keeping Community Action Agencies alive. The CSBG allows Community Action Agencies the flexibility to apply the grant money they receive to the ever-changing needs of the communities they serve. Now with the sequestration, GCAA member agencies are struggling even more to secure funding. But that hasn't stopped Community Action Agencies in Georgia from fulfilling their mission. Instead, the staff members from these agencies have been creative in seeking additional funding from the private sector. "We have learned how to work cooperatively with the government, private business, the community and the families we serve to be successful," says GCAA Executive Director Lorraine Daniels. "You can't do the work we have committed ourselves to as just one agency. We firmly believe without solid relationships with our partners none of us would be as successful."

Daniels says these organizations are so important because they represent a proven safety net for the country. "It's good for America and it's good for society," Daniels explains. "I believe in any civilized society there has got to be a segment of society that has devoted itself to the work of helping people who need a hand up." Daniels adds that her commitment has not waned over her 30 years of experience with community action because she has seen the positive results of giving everyone in a community a chance at success. "[Community Action Agencies] must continue to be that voice of consciousness and reason when it comes to how we treat our elderly, children, disadvantaged, low-income families and less fortunate," Daniels says.



SUPPORTING THE CITIZENS OF GEORGIA

May 8, 2013

Dear Friends,

The Georgia Community Action Association (GCAA) has played a significant role in improving the lives of Georgia residents for over 40 years. I am so grateful for all their good work and the positive impact they've had on the community.

This network of community organizations and public servants has been an invaluable resource for Georgia communities in need. Together, they have provided housing assistance, affordable childcare, job training, and other essential services. Their work and mission enhances the well-being of individuals and families, while respecting the dignity and worth of each person they serve. The Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority, which is part of the GCAA network and located in the 5th Congressional District, works with many members of the community in need, and does tremendous work to help alleviate the many problems associated with poverty in Georgia.

The people of the 5th District thank GCAA for all its hard work and wish them continued success in all their endeavors.

Keep the Faith,


John Lewis
Member of Congress

Getting Down To Business

Community Action Agency helps man expand struggling company

When Al Gibbs applied for assistance from Partnership for Community Action, Inc. in 2010, he was running his financial business out of a small, one room office, which he shared with his only other employee — his wife. He received a business loan, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and took part in the program's training sessions and personal business coaching.

"There is no other place that I know of where a person can get that level of assistance for free," Gibbs says. "The coaching sessions really helped me find a sense of purpose for why I was doing what I was doing. They helped me tailor my business plans and structure my ideas in order to be more successful."

Helping people be successful is the challenging mission of the Partnership for Community Action, Inc. in Clarkston. The Microenterprise Development Program was created to help the organization achieve this mission by assisting business owners in becoming more self-sufficient.

"We provide business development services for underemployed and unemployed people to help them establish their own business or expand their existing business," says Vonda Echols, program manager for the Microenterprise Development Program. "Our program is unique because we address both the personal side and the professional side of business training. And we never turn anyone away."

Through a combination of training, business resources and business loans, the Microenterprise Development Program helps new and existing businesses thrive. As part of the program, Gibbs took business classes covering topics such as QuickBooks Pro and tax practice, as well as receiving business and financial counseling. The skills and assistance that Gibbs found through the program allowed

him to expand his business by bringing on new clients, moving to a larger office and hiring 10 new employees.

"This program was instrumental in helping me create new business opportunities, which is crucial in this economy," Gibbs says.

After successfully completing the program, Gibbs began teaching training sessions and coaching others to help them move successfully through the program. He began as a volunteer, but now he is a paid contractor with the organization.

"[The Microenterprise Development Program] helped me tailor my business plans and structure my ideas in order to be more successful."

AL GIBBS, Business Owner

Each year the program gives a Business of the Year Award to someone who has been exceptionally successful in the program. In 2012, that award went to Gibbs.

"It took me completely by surprise," says Gibbs, who received the award during a ceremony for new program graduates. "I would refer anyone to this program who is serious about starting a new business or even those who have an existing business. No matter what you think you know, they can help you be more successful by amplifying the profits of an existing business and helping to expand your efforts."

BY **AMANDA CARAWAY**



Al Gibbs was able to expand his financial business thanks to the Microenterprise Development Program.

MICROENTERPRISE PROGRAMS

Georgia's Community Action Agencies are dedicated to helping people achieve self-sufficiency, and one way to do that is by making sure business owners are successful. The Community Action Agency's Microenterprise Development Program offers business development training and coaching sessions to help participants develop a new business or increase the productivity of an existing business. Participants receive training in areas that will help them be successful including business plan development, financial management, marketing and more. Business loans

are also available for qualifying participants. Although there is an income limit for financial support, anyone can take advantage of the business training and resources for a small fee, which covers training materials and coaching expenses. Program participants are invited to attend the annual business summit to assist them with marketing and networking. The business resource center is available to all participants and provides a good location for client meetings and helps meet other business needs. **AC**

A Head Start For Success

GCAA child development programs help whole family

In her new job as a photographer for an in-store portrait studio, Columbus resident Abrianna Petit is responsible for evoking smiles from children and their parents.

Getting those grins can be a tough task, but Petit says it's one she enjoys.

"I get kids to smile," she says.

Not that long ago, Petit herself was finding smiles hard to come by in her own home. But today, the 21-year-old mother of two and her children are finding it easier to smile thanks to Enrichment Services Program (ESP), one of the many Community Action Agencies helping those in need across the country. Petit enrolled her children in Early Head Start, the early childhood and family development service provided by ESP.

"My son 3-year-old Alberto — or A.J. — was slow to talk, and had other developmental problems," says Petit. "Head Start staff members from the local center came to the house to help him with his communication skills. He also had behavioral issues. He would take other children's toys and throw them down or smash them. He would sometimes spend all day kicking and screaming — you couldn't control him."

Petit says ESP's patient Early Head Start workers were able to modify his behavior — sans the use of any drugs — producing miraculous results. Petit says A.J., who "talks all the time now" is expected to start preschool in the fall.

Her daughter, Alexcia, who turned 1 in February, was behind in her motor-skill development, but Early Head Start came to the rescue again.

"She's getting better and that's a good thing," Petit says. "She studies her ABCs, says 'Mama,' 'Bye bye,' and 'A.J.'"

"Their specialists play and talk to the children both at the center and in regular two-hour visits to our home," she continued. "They involve me in every step of their work so that I can continue their work with the children at home."

It's been a learning process for her as well as the children, Petit says.

"It was called to my attention that I was over-indulging A.J. — giving him whatever he wanted without ever saying, 'No.' I realized I had to stop doing that."

Since her children were enrolled in Early Head Start classes last September, she has been able to complete her high school diploma requirements and secure satisfying, full-time employment.

"Early Head Start not only helped my children, but helped me as well. They gave me a chance to achieve major goals, and taught me many things along the way."

ABRIANNA PETIT, Mother of two

"The program allows me to go to work and finish high school," says Petit, who is scheduled to receive her diploma in December.

Petit, who is currently preparing to enlist in the U.S. Army, says she and her husband, a civilian employee based at Fort Benning, are looking forward to a summer move to Florida where she will be stationed as an administrative aide following basic training.

"(Enrichment Services Program) Early Head Start workers not only helped my children, but helped me as well," she says. "They gave me a chance to achieve major goals, and taught me many things along the way. Their staff is loving and caring — they're like family. They really do care."

BY BARRY WISDOM

Abrianna Petit and her two children, 1-year-old Alexcia and 3-year-old Alberto, found assistance at Early Head Start, which is offered through Enrichment Services Program.



PHOTO BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN

HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START

Georgia Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide comprehensive early childhood and family development services to children from birth to 5 years old, pregnant women and families.

In 2011-2012 more than 29,000 children were enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Designed to foster healthy development in low-income children and their families, Head Start agencies also offer individualized medical, dental and mental health care that is easily accessible. Some 28,000 Head Start children received treatment following screenings in 2011-12 and 2,229 children received

mental health services thanks to Head Start.

In addition, Head Start services are designed to be responsive and appropriate for each child's and family's developmental, ethnic, cultural and linguistic heritage and experience.

Head Start and Early Head Start eligibility is largely based on income (usually those families whose income is at or below the federal poverty level will qualify), with final determination made by local staff.

For more information regarding Head Start services in Georgia, go online to georgiaheadstart.org. **BW**

The Road To Sustainability

Homeless man gets back on his feet with Community Action Agency's housing program

Mark Aguilar was completely homeless when he was introduced to the Ninth District Opportunity, Inc. (NDO) a Community Action Agency in Northeast Georgia. Today Aguilar has a full-time job with benefits, and he lives in his own home with his wife and 10-month-old-daughter.

The NDO runs a housing and homeless prevention program with the goal of helping individuals become self-sufficient so they no longer require the use of shelters and other government programs. According to Shawn Howell, a housing program manager with Ninth District Opportunity, it is not just a financial aid program.

"We run an intensive case-management based program that uses needs assessment, accountability and progress review to ensure that those who receive funding are successful," Howell says. "This program requires commitment and is not a handout."

Aguilar was referred to the Ninth District Opportunity in 2011 through an acquaintance at the rescue shelter where he was living. Following an interview he was accepted into the program and within a week he had a place to live. Aguilar received funding to pay rent and utilities so he could concentrate on finding employment.

"Mark was only in the program for three months," Howell explains. "The total amount of funding that he received was around \$2,100, and now he is completely sustainable."

Aguilar agrees that client accountability played a part in his

success. After joining the program, he was required to check in with his case manager every couple of weeks as they tracked his process.

"Getting stuck at the rescue level is a problem," Aguilar says. "In my case this program worked perfectly to help me hit every point that I needed to hit in order to become sustainable."

Aguilar started by working at lower level jobs, such as doing yard work at a golf course, and gradually moved up to better paying jobs. He is currently a sales manager at a nutrition company, and he and his wife own a home across from the golf course where he worked cutting grass.

"It became a dual journey — the journey to help myself and the journey to help others."

MARK AGUILAR, homeowner

Although Aguilar's story might be exceptional, his experience with NDO demonstrates what a motivated individual can accomplish with a little assistance. He credits the staff at Ninth District Opportunity with helping him learn to develop the necessary skills to be successful in life. Having a support system was so important to his own success that he started mentoring others through the homeless prevention program.

"It became a dual journey — the journey to help myself and the



Mark Aguilar was homeless before he got help from the Ninth District Opportunity, Inc. Now he's married with a 10-month-old daughter.

journey to help others," Aguilar says. "If you have people working with you to guide you through the process it is easier to overcome the hurdles and be successful."

Howell grew up in poverty, so he experienced firsthand the importance of Community Action.

"We help people obtain the job skills necessary for employment, which clears out the shelters, keeps kids off the streets and cleans up the neighborhoods," says Howell. "If we invest in people our neighborhoods become safer and everyone becomes more successful. Landlords receive rent and utility payments get made, which keeps the costs down for everyone."

Aguilar says he would recommend this program to anyone who is looking to get back on their feet. There is a clear starting point and end point that makes it easy for anyone who has the heart to achieve.

"Just be honest and disciplined and you'll get there," Aguilar says. "I am so grateful for the opportunities this program has brought me."

BY AMANDA CARAWAY

ENDING HOMELESSNESS

Community Action Agencies operate homeless prevention and rapid-rehousing programs meant to assist those who are currently homeless or those who are two weeks away from becoming homeless. The program, funded by the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), provides opportunities for low-income families in Georgia to work and live in decency. Case managers work with partner organizations, such as government agencies and local car repair shops, to help solve problems and address issues that keep their clients from achieving sustainability. Programs include food assistance, job coaching and self-sufficiency counseling. The goal is to help individuals obtain job and life skills so that they can find employment and no longer require the assistance of state and federal programs. **AC**

Baseemah Aziz had never held a job outside the home before seeking job placement assistance from the Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority.



Finding Her Calling

Georgia housewife discovers a love of helping others while helping herself

BY AMANDA CARAWAY

Baseemah Aziz was a homemaker who had never held a job when circumstances changed and she had to become the family breadwinner. Her husband, Imam Shamshiddin Aziz, had always supported Aziz and their three daughters, but he developed serious health concerns that meant he could no longer work.

His monthly disability check was not enough to cover the household expenses, so Aziz went to the Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority for help. FACAA directed the family to a local food pantry, provided utility assistance and financial counseling and helped Aziz discover her calling in life.

“Those who work for the agency help people and save lives,” Aziz says. “Their hearts are in their work.”

After their basic needs were met, Aziz was able to focus on supporting her family. FACAA helped Aziz obtain her very first job working as a temporary energy assistance program worker. The temporary

job led to a permanent position that she held for more than 10 years.

“They really brought me out of my shell,” Aziz says. “I was comfortable being a homemaker, but they helped me realize I could also be career oriented. They helped me become more productive and develop the necessary skills, and then they watched me grow.”

As her household stabilized, she was able to continue pursuing an education. Aziz entered a training program and earned two

“They helped me become more productive and develop the necessary skills, and then they watched me grow.”

BASEEMAH AZIZ
Executive Administrative Assistant

certificates to become a case management worker for the Energy Assistance Program. Then she began helping families like her own.

“I have a personal calling to help people and I am paid to do it,” Aziz says. “People come to the program in need and they leave self-sufficient. It’s very rewarding work.”

The philosophy behind the program is that once the financial pressure of supporting a family is relieved, it is easier to focus on finding work. The training Aziz received prepared her for a higher paying job. She is now an executive administrative assistant at the Fairburn-Palmetto Housing Authority and she plans to retire at age 62 after a long and full career.

“Life is a journey and we learn from the cradle to the grave,” Aziz says. “If you are really blessed, you will have the opportunity to help those who are less fortunate.”

Aziz encourages families in need to come to the Community Action Authority with an open mind. The organization offers

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Community Action Agencies offer Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Programs, also known as LIHEAP, to help families in need by providing federally funded assistance for home energy expenses. In 2012, 158,955 households received assistance through LIHEAP. The program resources include helping families pay home energy bills, assisting families with energy crisis management and providing the necessary support for energy-related minor home repairs and weatherization. Helping families keep their homes warm during the cold winter months and cool during the hot summer months helps reduce the risk of health and safety concerns that arise from unsafe heating and cooling practices. The health risks resulting from improper heating and cooling disproportionately affect those who are already suffering from medical ailments. Statistics show that 74 percent of LIHEAP recipients are elderly and 48 percent are disabled. Households with incomes up to 60 percent of the estimated state median income are eligible to receive assistance from LIHEAP. **AC**

More information regarding how to apply for the LIHEAP assistance program, including an application, can be found at the Georgia Community Action website at www.georgiacaa.org.

more than financial assistance and taking advantage of every program that they offer can lead to self-sufficiency and happiness.

“Like they say, if you give a man a fish you can feed him for a day, but if you teach a man to fish, he can feed himself for life,” Aziz says.

Transitioning to Self-Sufficiency

Community Action Agency improves woman's life through housing, education

The year 2013 did not start out well for Nicole Maynard. At the beginning of the New Year, the mother of three found herself unemployed and facing eviction from the three-bedroom apartment where her family lived.

"At one point, I was thinking I wasn't going to be able to make it," Maynard recalls.

In need of help, Maynard turned to one of the reach-out centers for the Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. (EOC) for help. Maynard says there she was put in touch with her current case worker and she learned about programs EOC offered that could help her and her family.

For instance, Maynard and her children currently have a place to live through EOC's Transitional Housing Program while she searches for a job.

According to Nequana Stevens, community service manager at EOC, this program allows Maynard to live with no bills right now so she can get back on her feet and work on finding permanent housing and employment. Additionally, she works one-on-one with her case manager to receive counseling on finding permanent housing. "It's a program to help them remove their barriers and help them become self sufficient," she adds.

And Maynard is using EOC's Employment Services to find work. She says every Wednesday she meets with her case worker to go through job leads, and then EOC provides her transportation to go fill out applications and attend interviews.

According to Sarita Hill, director of operations and administrations for EOC, their Employment Services program works with clients on finding employment through partnerships they have with retailers, health services and community

businesses, as well as taking clients to various job fairs.

EOC also does what it can to remove any barriers a client may have from finding work. "Whether it's transportation to get them to the interview, buying them clothes or a uniform, we try to get them to work," Hill says.

"I feel like the agency has offered me the extra lift to show me that I can make it, I can find a job, and they offered that help that we really needed."

NICOLE MAYNARD, GED student

EOC also works with clients on their education, such as if they need to complete their GED. In Maynard's case, she was encouraged by EOC staff to get her GED, which she is now in the process of finishing. Maynard says she is excited about getting her GED as it will allow her to pursue her dream job of working with children. "It will open up those doors," she adds.

As far as Maynard is concerned, if it wasn't for EOC, she and her family would be homeless right now. She is very appreciative of the help EOC has provided her through housing, helping her get her GED, and finding work so she can ultimately take care of her children. "I feel like the agency has offered me the extra lift to show me that I can make it, I can find a job, and they offered that help that we really needed," she says.

BY **CORRIE PELC**



Nicole Maynard was jobless and facing eviction when she found help from Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Community Action Agencies work to prevent homelessness and poverty through employment services.

These programs work on both job readiness, by working with each client to develop an action plan and offering counseling, as well as providing support to help remove barriers from employment.

Agency staff assist clients on finding a job through assessing their previous experience and what are some actions they might need to be taken to make them eligible for employment, such as pursuing their GED or finding transportation.

Clients develop action plans to help them through the process, and also take part in workshops and are provided with resources on topics such as work ethics and dependability.

CAAs work with various partners, such as retailers, health services, and community businesses, to find their clients both work experience and ultimately employment. Additionally, Community Action Agencies go the extra mile by providing transportation both to job interviews and to jobs, as well as help in purchasing clothing or uniforms. **CP**

Q & A

WITH LORRAINE DANIELS

Since 2004, Lorraine Daniels has served as Executive Director of Georgia Community Action Agency. Daniels moved to Georgia in 1996, having spent 23 years with New Visions for Newport County, a community action agency in Rhode Island. During her time with both organizations, Daniels pioneered several new programs on a local and national level. With Georgia CAA, Daniels continues to tread new and exciting ground in Community Action.

What is it about the work of Community Action that appeals to you?

I really have a heart for people and particularly, people who are struggling to get a foothold and achieve their dreams — just the idea that I can be instrumental in helping people achieve their career goals and offer them practical skills and make a difference in their lives. I just believe there is a need for more people to get into this work to strengthen families and communities. I saw the significance of it and I wanted to get involved.

What are some challenges Georgia is facing right now?

Low-income families are faced daily with the “survival challenge.” Any unexpected life event can disrupt their progress toward self-sufficiency. The elderly often have to choose between food or heat. There is a significant number of elderly that don’t have adequate medical care and they are not energy safe. Also, ensuring that our families are living in safe and healthy homes is crucial. Weatherization

programs help to meet this challenge. In other words, what we do with our weatherization program makes lighting and heating use more efficient for them, saves money and frees up income to meet other essential needs. We also offer help with prescription drugs and provide transportation to remote locations. Out of 159 counties in the state, 99 of them are rural. Without the intervention of CAAs, a lot of the residents of those communities would not have access to those services.

How are CAAs able to adapt more quickly than a national organization? What are the advantages of a CAA?

We are closer to the community and people are able to access us without a bureaucracy. If there is a local crisis, we can also give a fairly rapid response.

There are a lot of advantages of a CAA, but one of the most important is the relationship with the community.

CAA Boards are made up of community members empowering other community members. Because the Board, staff and leaders know the community, there’s a great deal of trust and cooperation when it comes to assessing their needs.

What are some misconceptions about CAAs?

That we’re just “hand out” agencies. The truth is that CAAs are skilled professionals able to put together an assessment of each individual’s or family’s needs and move people from dependency to self-sufficiency. The biggest thing that hinders us from doing that is there is often difficulty in getting the general public to realize the role of CAAs as change agents that devote our resources, time and effort to improving individual and community conditions. We are working to increase the marketing scope of CAA networks to bring a greater awareness of the great work achieved by our local CAAs and their partners.

How have the budget cuts affected Georgia CAA?

We did a survey to determine the impact of the [federal government] sequester and the impact was pretty significant. Around 60 percent of the Community Action Agencies in Georgia operate Head Start classes and the budget cuts are already causing some of those agencies to close their Head Start programs — 64

“There are a lot of advantages of a CAA, but one of the most important is the relationship with the community.”

LORRAINE DANIELS,
executive director of Georgia CAA

percent are laying off staff, 92 percent are reducing program services and 42 percent have implemented furlough days. All of them are currently seeking additional resources and approximately 2,400 fewer children will receive Head Start services.

What is the most important thing for CAAs going forward?

I think it’s important to acknowledge the next generation of Community Action workers still have many challenges to overcome with less resources. Our networks understand this and we have taken meaningful steps to expand and increase accountability for the use of public dollars while implementing organizational standards that will help us strengthen our image. But it’s this type of evidence-based practice that will carry us into the future.

BY MIKE BLOUNT



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGIA CAA

Getting The Word Out

Partnership helps Georgia CAA improve community

In today's climate of government spending cuts, Community Action Agencies need to be good stewards of public funding. One way Georgia CAA is doing this is through a unique partnership with Reach Consulting Group LLC. By partnering with a private organization, Georgia CAA can serve more people and provide better services with their existing funding.

President and CEO Robford Hill says his company employs powerful, cost-saving strategies that have helped corporations, law firms and higher education institutions save as much as 20 percent on indirect costs without sacrificing quality.

"With budget cuts and less funding, it is important to try to do more with what you have," Hill says. "We've been proactive in helping CAAs achieve their goals and become more aligned in a competitive marketplace."

But that only goes so far, Hill adds. Reach Consulting Group LLC also helps Georgia CAA gain support by bringing awareness of their work to corporate interests. Hill says his company supports and co-sponsors several fundraising events such as golf tournaments each year to boost corporate involvement.

"It makes good sense and it makes good corporate sense to support them because you can see the value of their services everywhere," Hill says. "If you look at the quantification of their value across all of the companies and all of the workers that are benefiting, you can see it is a good investment."

Hill says the relationship between Reach Consulting Group LLC and Georgia CAA is a perfect partnership because the work Community Action Agencies are doing across the state is

crucial — and most people aren't aware they see it every day.

In some remote parts of Georgia, there are people who would receive no services were it not for CAAs. Hill says he learned that in the past some residents even mined for coal on the side of the road because that was their only source for heating during winter. Thanks to the weatherization programs provided by CAAs in Georgia, that is no longer a harsh reality for some of the state's more impoverished citizens.

"There are very few places you get to discuss the impact of a service an organization provides and see the direct impact to families and children, but CAAs are doing exactly that."

ROBFORD HILL, president and CEO of Reach Consulting Group LLC

"There are very few places you get to discuss the impact of a service an organization provides and see the direct impact to families and children, but CAAs are doing exactly that," Hill says, adding that CAAs benefit low-income individuals and families across ethnic backgrounds and cultures throughout Georgia. Without their support, Hill believes many people would be without the means to survive and flourish in today's economy.

BY MIKE BLOUNT

Robford Hill says Reach Consulting Group helps Georgia CAA reduce costs so they can provide more services.



PHOTO BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BECOME A SPONSOR TODAY

The Georgia Community Action Association member agencies need your support. Contributions from sponsors like you help provide services to over 400,000 Georgians. Georgia CAA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and donations are deductible as allowable by law. All donations will be acknowledged in writing, including the Georgia CAA tax identification number for your records. **MB**

For more information on how to donate, visit www.georgiacaa.org.php.



Dr. James Powell, a retired pastor, continues to volunteer around 100 hours annually for Clayton County Community Services Authority.

Spreading The Word

Former pastor shares CSA's mission through volunteerism

Dr. James Powell once shared the word of God, now he shares the word of community action.

The licensed psychologist and retired Methodist pastor has volunteered for Clayton County Community Services Authority for over two decades.

Recruited to serve as a board member 24 years ago by CSA Executive Director Charles W. Grant, Powell “guesstimates” he donates some 100 hours annually to the agency in a variety of administrative leadership roles, ranging from helping establish policy guidelines, to grant writing and public relations outreach.

“[The Community Services Authority] doesn’t give charity, it empowers people to make changes and begin to take responsibility for and care for themselves,” says the 68-year-old Powell. “The American success story can still work for people in need through action.”

Powell’s own “can-do” attitude and proactive disposition prompted him to augment his experience as a church leader with a psychology degree.

“I was a minister who felt the most effective course for me was to also serve as a psychologist,” says Powell, who retired from the pulpit in July 2012. The last 15 years of his career in the clergy

were spent aiding seniors and other people in need through a collaborative effort with an inner-city Baptist congregation based in Atlanta.

“If people don’t give back, a society becomes all-consuming — not alive and growing.”

DR. JAMES POWELL,
Clayton County Community
Services Authority board member

“Dr. Powell is always there for me,” says Grant of Powell’s unwavering dedication to the CSA. “He’s always been a willing participant who I can rely on. He offers counseling sessions, which is a good asset for our agency, and he’s good with PR — keeping the public aware of what we do and how we do it.”

Powell says getting the word out about the many aspects of CSA has been one of his goals as a volunteer.

“People don’t generally understand what community action agencies do,” Powell says. “We get articles published about us periodically, and we put out a newsletter for our supporters in Henry, Fayette and Clayton counties, but we do so much it can be confusing.”

“But what I tell people in my ‘elevator speech’ is that a lot of what we do is working to fight poverty, and to give back people their self-respect and empower them to succeed. On a practical level, we offer weatherization of homes, transportation for seniors ... we get people food when they’re hungry, refer those in need of legal-aid resources to appropriate nonprofits, and coordinate with many agencies to serve in any way we can. We’re less concerned with getting the credit than seeing people get the help they need.”

Powell says his work on behalf of Clayton County’s CSA is continually fueled by the positive differences he sees in the lives of its clients, from the improved comfort a home weatherization project has made, to how the agency’s service inspired clients to go on to college and are now employed professionals.

“I’m out in the community a lot,” Powell says, “and people will tell me they

VOLUNTEERING AT GEORGIA’S COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

Georgia Community Action Agencies need your help to improve thousands of lives across the state. These agencies could not do the work they are doing without the help of volunteers.

Agencies are particularly interested in volunteers who can invest their professional skills in existing CAA programs and train others to use those skills — ranging from carpentry to fundraising. Those familiar with early childhood and nutrition education, and food-pantry management are also needed. Community members are also encouraged to volunteer by serving on the boards that govern CAAs.

The volunteer process is simple. Anyone interested in volunteer work needs only contact a local Community Action Agency and give hours of availability.

Through the volunteer application process, agencies are able to match potential volunteers to the right program based on their skill set. **BW**

For more information on volunteering, contact your local Community Action Agency and find out how you can help.

legitimately appreciate what CSA has done. That is what is most exciting to me.

“If people don’t give back, a society becomes all-consuming — not alive and growing. I’m grateful for what people have done for me in years past, and it’s important to me to do the same.”

BY **BARRY WISDOM**

A Powerful Partnership

Georgia Community Action Association pairs with corporation to help community members

The spirit of giving is engrained in the culture of Georgia Power. “One of Georgia Power’s early presidents said, ‘You are a citizen wherever you serve’ and brought the essence of giving back into our corporate culture,” says Low-Income Weatherization Program Manager Steve Lawrence. “For all of our people throughout the state it is our community and it is our responsibility to take care of people.”

As an organization that is so committed to serving its community, Lawrence says the partnership with the Georgia Community Action Association (GCAA) is a natural one. “[Georgia Community Action Association] is really good at identifying the needs of the community, and for organizations that want to help but don’t know where to start because they are busy doing other things, this is a great fit,” Lawrence says.

Through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), Georgia Power receives funding every three years that allows it to contribute to GCAA’s low-income weatherization program, providing necessary energy resources to Georgia residents. “One of our jobs is to make sure people are more comfortable in the winter and summer, [GCAA] helps us do that,” Lawrence says. “A lot of the people we help are elderly women who are on fixed incomes and could not survive without this program.”

Because GCAA is a grassroots organization that really knows the local community and its needs, Lawrence adds, they can really assess problems and present potential partners with a variety of solutions to match that particular organization’s skills. “They know the community very well, we can

focus on some needs we are aware of, but that’s not what we do as a general basis, so they can link us to what is going on and show us how best to help,” Lawrence says. “They can help us use our talents in the best way possible and we can still conduct business and still be a good part of the community.”

Lawrence, who has worked for Georgia Power for 22 years, says it’s so important to help because the weatherization services foster self-sufficiency among residents. “It’s not a hand out, it’s a hand up that increased the self worth of these people.”

“For all of our people throughout the state it is our community and it is our responsibility to take care of people.”

STEVE LAWRENCE, Low-Income Weatherization Program Manager, Georgia Power

Lawrence encourages other organizations to partner with GCAA to make a difference in the community as part of a larger social responsibility. “As part of a big organization you can get really removed from a person and not know what they need. It’s important to work with organizations that know the community and can help you connect at a local level to give your community members what they need.”

BY KENDALL FIELDS



Steve Lawrence of Georgia Power partners with GCAA to provide low-income weatherization to residents.

GEORGIA CAA BY THE NUMBERS

According to a 2011 survey by the National Association for State Community Services Programs:

- Georgia Department of Human Services administers CSBG money to **20** agencies and 4 qualifying counties in **100%** of the counties in Georgia
- **74%** of GA families served were in poverty and **29%** of GA families served were in severe poverty
- GA CSBG agencies provided services to **368,220** low-income individuals in **186,968** families
- This included **95,189** children, **37,654** people with disabilities, **69,491** seniors, and **99,438** people who lacked health insurance.
- Georgia CAAs addressed **166,076** barriers to employment for low income individuals across the state
- **8,806** low-income households in Georgia achieved an increase in financial assets or financial skills
- **63,392** infants, children, youth, parents, and other adults participated in Child and Family Development programs supported by Georgia CAAs

GCAA Member Agencies Need Your Support

FIND YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

Today there are 20 Community Action Agencies in the State of Georgia, comprising a human service network capable of serving all 159 counties in the State. Go to www.georgiacaa.org to access the Georgia Map to find an agency near you and find out how you can get involved in your community.

DONATE

Georgia Community Action Association relies on your donations to continue helping Georgia residents thrive. Make a donation online or by mail.

Submit electronic donations to:
www.georgiacaa.org/donation2_form

Mail donations to:
Georgia Community Action Association
1000 Main Street
Forest Park, GA 30297-1808
ATTN: Advertisement

BECOME A MEMBER

Help Georgia Community Action Agency fight poverty. Become a GCAA member today and make a difference in the lives of Georgia residents. Benefits include:

- Free quarterly newsletter
- Annual conference participation
- Professional development and training
- Legislative education
- Capacity building tools for your organization
- Peer to peer organizational intervention
- Leadership development
- Public policy and legislative education

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